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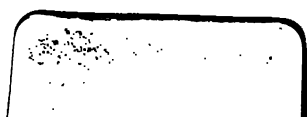
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LADY-BIRD.

A TALE.

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☛ The Author of this work gives notice that she reserves to herself the right of translating it.

L A D Y - B I R D .

A T A L E .

BY

LADY GEORGIANA FULLERTON,

AUTHOR OF "ELLEN MIDDLETON," &c.

" With caution judge of possibility ;
Things thought unlikely, e'en impossible,
Experience often shows us to be true."

SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON :

EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.

1852.

249. v. 438.

LONDON
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.



LADY-BIRD.

CHAPTER I.

"Joy for the freed one, she might not stay
When the crown had fallen from her life away;
She might not linger, a weary thing,
A dove with no home for its broken wing,
Thrown on the harshness of alien skies
That know not its own land's melodies,
From the long heart withering early gone;
Her task is done."

Mrs. HEMANS.

"There stands a spectre in your hall;
The guilt of blood is at your door;
You changed a wholesome heart to gall;
You held your course without remorse."

TENNYSON.

A DAY came on which Mrs. Lifford felt herself still weaker than usual. She sent for Mr. Erving, the priest of Stonehouseleigh, and he stayed with her some time. Afterwards she asked to see her husband. Gertrude was sitting

in the dressing-room when he went in. She could hear their voices, though the door was closed. A word here and there reached her ear. Once she heard her mother exclaim, "No, it is not possible,—say you did not do so." Another time, "I tell you, Henry, that you have done wrong, very wrong. You do not know what you have done." Then there was a low moaning like the cry of physical pain, or of an intense inward suffering. An instant afterwards the door was thrown open, and Mr. Lifford, with a face as pale as death, said. "Gertrude, go to your mother,—she is dying." He rang the bell with violence, and rushed down stairs.

When Gertrude saw her mother's face she felt at once it was no vain alarm. He was not likely to have been startled too soon. Mrs. Lifford was gasping for breath, and could only hold out her arms to her child. She spoke only two words during the few minutes that life was trembling on the verge of death. Once she looked up to

Heaven, as she pressed Gertrude's head closer to her breast, and murmured the word "Father ;" and then in her ear she whispered "Try——" More she could not utter, but gazed into her eyes for a moment with an unutterable expression of tenderness, fear, and supplication,—and then she died. That heart which had throbbed so long ceased to beat, and the spirit returned to the God who had given, tried, and exalted it, in the fiery furnace of suffering.

When Mr. Lifford returned to that room, followed by others, he stood an instant at the door, and a cold shudder passed through his frame. His daughter turned her face for one second towards him, pointed to the form of her whom she still held in her arms, and in a tone of unnatural calmness uttered the word, "Dead." She did not add, but in that dreadful moment her eyes said, "You have killed her!" With a wild and piercing cry she turned from him, and, as he slowly approached she stretched out her arm behind her, as if

to keep him away. It is possible that at such a moment even his heart might have been touched and softened ; but to be thus repulsed, and in the presence of others, awakened the bitterest and most vindictive feelings in his mind. He went away, and she remained alone with her misery—alone though others spoke to her. Alone, then, and for days afterwards. If her grief had been simple in its nature it would have been less dreadful ; but fear, suspense, resentment against the father whom she ought to have loved, and against one whom she did love with all the strength of her soul, were mixed with her sorrow, and embittered every tear that fell in that dark room. She would not move from the foot of that bed, from that spot where her father never came again. She would not look at the picture opposite to it, on which she had so often gazed ; her eyes were fixed on the ground, and they seldom shed tears.

The priest came and prayed by the bed-side ; and for her mother's soul she prayed with intense

fervour, but not for herself. It seemed as if all her feelings were suspended within her till she could learn her fate, and the rigid endurance of that suspense was offered up as a sacrifice in that chamber of mourning. When the priest addressed to her words of consolation, she raised her eyes for an instant, and said, "Yes—soon, perhaps, I may feel that." And he saw that the seed did not penetrate the surface, and he spoke oftener to God of that poor child, and less for the present of God to her. Then came the day of the funeral, with all its gloomy grandeur and solemn pomp. So the pride of the living had willed it. The ruling passion strong even in the face of death. The prayers and sacrifices of the Church,—the same for the rich and for the poor,—were offered up for that humble spirit which had been indeed poor in the midst of riches, but the husband who had not loved her, and scarcely wept over her corpse, had it consigned to the grave with all the pomp and circumstance of

human pride. Gertrude's soul sickened within her at the sight of banners and escutcheons by the side of the shrine which held the mortal remains of her mother. During the service for the dead (at which they both assisted,) she once looked towards her father, with eyes almost blinded by tears. His were dry, and it might be accident, but they seemed complacently fixed on the shield on which were quartered her arms and his. She turned away, and hid her face in her hands. Perhaps she prayed that she might not hate him. The funeral was over, with all its soothing religious duties, with all its stately worldly pomp. Once there came into her mind lines which she used to repeat years ago—not applicable, but akin to what she felt that day:

“ And they bore away the royal dead
With requiems to his rest,
With knightly plumes and banners,
All waving in the wind ;
But a woman's broken heart was left
In its lone despair behind.”

The next day Gertrude went for the first time

into the drawing-room. She was in deep mourning. There was not the least trace of colour in her cheeks; the stern expression of her features was unrelieved by any of those soft shades or playful lights which used to flit over her face with such indescribable charm. Whatever light there was in it now came from the excessive brightness of her eyes. She had not shed tears enough to dim their brilliancy, and there was a fire burning in them which had been fed, not quenched by sorrow. She was resolved to have an explanation with her father; she must know if Adrien had abandoned her—with or without reason. She must know if there was any hope left for her of happiness on this side the grave. She felt the most profound conviction that the scene which had been fatal to her mother had had reference to her destiny. In some way or other he had laid his cold hand upon it, and blasted it by his touch.

When the post came in, he received a letter,

which seemed to pre-occupy him considerably. As he left the room he said, "I wish you would come to my study in about an hour, as I have something of importance to communicate to you." A sudden revulsion of feeling came over Gertrude at that moment; he had perhaps heard from Adrien,—her suspicions, her fears, her misery might have been groundless. She tried to be calm; she sat opposite the clock, watching the minute-hand as it went round,—too slowly as she felt at one moment,—too fast as the hour was nearly elapsed. When it struck the appointed time she slowly walked to the study.

Mr. Lifford was sitting at his table. There was a shade of embarrassment in his manner, and he cleared his throat two or three times before beginning to speak. "I have received a letter this morning," he said, "which has somewhat embarrassed me, as it may be disagreeable to you, as well as to myself, to have any exertion to make so soon after your poor

mother's death ; but it is inevitable, and as the circumstance I allude to is of paramount importance to you, I must at once speak on a subject which I had intended some time longer to defer. You may have heard of the family of Mirasole, with whom we have had many family affairs to discuss. I saw the Marquis de Mirasole in Spain, and came to an understanding with him on several points of great importance to your brother's fortune. Amongst others it was agreed upon between us that a marriage between you and his son would be highly desirable, and having assured myself that the young man would in every respect be a suitable husband for you, I gave my consent to the proposal, and nothing can be more satisfactory than all the conditions of fortune and position that it affords. Besides the advantages to yourself there are others, as I said before, of vast consequence to your brother, and I rejoice that the interests of both thus coincide. But what I scarcely rejoice at is,

that M. de Mirasole, whom I expected here but not quite so soon, has in this letter announced his arrival, and that he will be here to-morrow morning. However, as he cannot be considered henceforward as a stranger by us, it will not be thought extraordinary that we should receive him even at this early period of our mourning, and I hope that his attentions and the new duties you will enter upon before long will prevent your giving way to an excessive depression of spirits."

Mr. Lifford had said all this without once looking at his daughter, a mode of proceeding which was rather habitual to him, especially when addressing her. As he did not now receive any answer he was obliged to raise his eyes towards her.

"Will you be kind enough," she then said, fixing hers steadily upon him, "to answer me one question? Have you received no other proposal of this kind but the one you speak of?"

He seemed to hesitate for an instant, and

then answered, "None that deserved consideration."

"Then you have received proposals," she said in the same calm manner, "from Adrien d'Arberg?"

"The gentleman you mention did me that honour," he answered with a sneer.

"And you refused those proposals without consulting my mother or me?"

"I did so, Miss Lifford. Pray what is the drift of these questions?"

"Bear with me a moment. How long ago did this happen?"

"It may be four or five weeks ago."

"M. d'Arberg was here then?"

"He was."

"And you denied it!" she exclaimed.

Mr. Lifford turned pale with anger and said, "If I evaded your inquiries on that occasion it was from the wish to spare your mother unnecessary agitation."

"And you refused him, then, without con-

sulting her or me? What did you say to him?" She uttered these last words with her eyes bent on the ground, and her lips tightly compressed.

"That he did me much honour, but that I had other views and intentions."

"Did he ask to see me, or *her*?" she said, clasping a small picture of her mother, which she wore round her neck.

"These questions are unnecessary. Pray dismiss that subject from your thoughts at once."

"Dismiss it!" she slowly repeated. "Dismiss it! Has it ever occurred to you that there are thoughts which will not be dismissed?"

"I have not patience to listen to any folly of this nature. From your birth you have irritated me. Abstain from doing so now. There are points on which I cannot be thwarted with impunity."

"And you imagine that I shall accept a husband at your hands. You think that I shall submit to you in a matter, not merely of life or

death, but of honour and of dishonour. That I shall smile on the stranger you have brought here to woo me over my mother's grave, and stand with him at the altar with a lie on my lips and despair in my heart? You have embittered my childhood, you have clouded my youth, you have——" Here she stopped short; even in the passion of that moment she trembled at the dreadful words she was about to utter, and clasp-
ing her throat, went on: "You have endangered the happiness, the peace, the virtue of your child, but I tell you, father, that you have not the power to break my heart. I shall be true to him on whom my mother's dying blessing rests, to him whose image at this moment stands between me and despair. If I were never to see him again—if I had not the strength of that hope I should tremble for myself——"

"You may tremble, then, for there is little prospect that you will ever behold again the presumptuous suitor who dared to thrust himself

into my house in my absence, and even into your mother's presence. Her deplorable weakness——”

“O, for Heaven's sake, do not speak of her,” Gertrude cried as she wrung her hands in almost intolerable emotion. “I dare not think of her, for I would forget that scene—that cry——”

“And who but you,” he exclaimed, “hurried your mother to the grave?—you and this wretched man whom I forbid you ever to name again?”

She stood opposite to him, drawn up to her full height, her lips as white as a sheet, and each muscle of her frame rigid.

“You were right in saying that you were not to be thwarted with impunity. The words you have uttered will haunt me continually. You are sufficiently revenged: but listen to me now. I will not marry M. de Mirasole. I will not be made a sacrifice to the furtherance of your views for Edgar. I will not break the promises I have made.”

"Ah, this honourable man has prevaricated then. He told me you were bound by no promise."

"He gave me up then!" she exclaimed, in a tone of such anguish that even Mr. Lifford started at the sound. But he thought the moment favourable, and drawing a French newspaper from a heap on his table, he put it under her eyes, and pointed to a passage. She read the following words:—

*"Nous apprenons avec un vif intérêt que le Comte Adrien d'Arberg, auteur des "Essais Philosophiques sur le Christianisme," après avoir cédé, par un acte formel, ses propriétés en Bretagne au Comte Henri d'Arberg, son frère, s'est rendu au séminaire d'Orléans, décidé à suivre la vocation qui paraît depuis longtemps lui être réservée, et à entrer dans le sacerdoce dont il formera, sans aucun doute, un des plus beaux ornements."**

* "We have been much interested in learning that the Count Adrien d'Arberg, the author of "Philosophical Essays on Christianity," after having concluded the arrangement of his affairs by the formal

After reading these words Gertrude remained silent; her father watched her for a moment, and thought he had attained his purpose, for the vehemence of her excitement seemed at an end. She looked almost as calm and as stern as himself, and in an instant left the room. Perhaps if he had remembered at that moment what he had felt himself on the day that Lady Clara dismissed him, and while he went to the opera as usual, and sat in a box opposite to her without flinching, or betraying a symptom of what he was enduring, he might have guessed at what was passing in his daughter's heart. Her anger was calm, but it was fearful. The cup was full, and that day it had overflowed. Duty, principle, conscience were silenced by a resentment deep and strong as the nature that it swayed. She was his victim. Her will had

surrender of his property in Brittany to his brother, the Count Henri d'Arberg, has proceeded to the seminary of Orleans, with the intention of following the vocation which has long appeared to be marked out for him, and to enter the priesthood, which will doubtless reckon him hereafter amongst its brightest ornaments."

been vain against his. He had shivered to pieces the fabric of her happiness, and had stolen away the light of her existence. And she had been feebly loved by him whom even now she adored with an idolatrous worship. He had forsaken her, and his conscience was doubtless at rest. He would toil for others, he would save other souls perhaps, but of hers he had made sad havoc. He ought never to have loved, or never to have abandoned her. She was alone, completely alone in the world. She had told him there was that in her heart which must not be trifled with. She had lately at times felt a strange incoherence in her thoughts. She felt as if her father was pursuing her, and this sensation became a waking nightmare. He might drag her to the altar, and she would have no strength to resist. He had sent Adrien away, and she had not had power to prevent him. Was she a slave? Could not she escape? She was under the influence of this strange oppression—

half feverish and half real,—when the sound of a carriage startled her. “It is that man,” she wildly exclaimed; “it must be that man he has sent for!”

She snatched her bonnet and her shawl, and rushed down the back-stairs into the garden without meeting any one. When she passed the stone bench near her mother’s window, where she had sat with Adrien the day he went away, her steps faltered; at the chapel-door she knelt an instant; but when she tried to pray, though her lips moved, passion and anger rose like a mist between her and Heaven. Once she exclaimed: “Father Lifford, Father Lifford; would to God you were here! Why have you forsaken me too?”

There were steps on the gravel walk, and she fancied once more that she heard the sound of wheels in the distance; and without knowing what she was doing, she hurried on through the park. It was a false alarm, but she did not stop to

listen. "I cannot go back to that house," she said to herself, "I cannot see that man. I cannot meet my father again. I will leave his roof. His face, his voice, stand between me and peace. My mother's death I cannot forget. Her last cry is in my ears. He hated me before, and now——O, there is an abyss between us which never can be filled up. I will go to Mary Grey, and to her mother. They will protect me; they are the only friends I ever had. Why have they not been to me in my sorrow? But I forget, I would neither see any one, nor read any letters. I will go to them now. I cannot think for myself, they will think for me. O, for a kind hand to hold mine, but for an instant now, for a drop of cold water to slake this burning thirst."

She opened the gate of the park, and hurried on towards Stonehouseleigh. It was a clear frosty night, and in the distance she saw the roof of the cottage with the icicles hanging from

the straw ; a light was burning in the window. She hurried on, for she felt faint and ill. Unclosing the latch with a trembling hand, she passed through the little gate and knocked at the door. It opened. " Mary," she said in a hoarse whisper. It was not Mary's voice that said, " Good Heavens, Miss Lifford ! " " Maurice, where is Mary ? Call Mary directly—call your mother ; I am ill." She staggered, and he threw open the door of the little parlour, and closed the outer one. She sank on a chair. " Call them, Maurice," she repeated, " I want Mary." He looked at her with a mixture of fear and embarrassment. He scarcely knew what to say,—he was afraid to tell her that they were not there,—that they had gone to London that morning. He had remained behind to conclude all the arrangements. His heart was beating violently ;—what could he do ? She was looking fearfully pale. He left the room for some water, and held it to her lips. " Where are they ? are they *not* here ? " " No, my Lady-

Bird, no." She fainted away; he carried her to the couch and knelt by her side, chafing her brow with cold water—he had nothing else at hand—and looking at her with eyes which would have recalled life in the dead, if eyes could ever do so.

It was some time before she opened hers, and then her marble cheek was resting on a cushion, and her hair had fallen on her shoulders. Her face was wet with the water with which he had bathed her temples, and her hands with the hot tears he had shed upon them. She started up affrighted.

"Where am I? What am I doing here, Maurice?"

"You are in the cottage, Lady-Bird, where you have often spent happy hours, where from your childhood you have been welcomed by true affection. You came to Mary,—Mary is not here."

"Nor your mother? alas!"

"No, but you are as safe as if the whole world were around you."

"I never doubted it," she coldly and proudly replied. "I must go."

"Where, *where*?" he anxiously asked.

"*Where*, indeed!" she ejaculated, and tried to rise, but fell back exhausted. "I am undone," she murmured to herself, "I may die here; but if I did—O shame! O terror! Maurice, go for Mr. Erving this minute, go; he will help me and guide me."

"But I cannot leave you alone—I cannot, indeed."

"You must: go this instant. Go, Maurice, as you value my blessing or my curse."

"But, Lady-Bird, for God's sake listen to me; I am expecting a man here to carry these trunks away to the station. If he does not find me he will come in; if I lock the door he may call the neighbours." She made a strong effort to get up, but became giddy after a

step or two, and was forced to sit down again.

"Miss Lifford, you can trust me: be calm and listen to what I say to you. Let me get you a bit of bread and a glass of wine from the kitchen. Try and eat, and then lie down on that couch for an hour; you are exhausted with grief; you cannot walk now, that is clear."

Tears for the first time fell from her eyes in abundance, and turning to Maurice she said in a tone of touching helplessness, "I will do what you advise; I cannot think for myself."

He brought her the food, and she swallowed a little. He watched her as a mother does a sick child, and then said in a low voice, "You are suffering intensely. In the name of the friendship that has united you and Mary, will you not tell Mary's brother what has made your cup of sorrow overflow? We have been friends since the days of childhood. O, Lady-Bird, will you not open your heart to one who would give his life to

spare you a tear? If others have been unkind to you, will you not confide in an affection that never can fail you?"

"Affection!" she bitterly answered; "there is no such thing on earth. Where I should have been loved, I have been hated: there is no happiness for me, and I must now return, for I am a little stronger now, to that detested house where my mother consumed away her life, where my youth has been saddened and my soul for ever blighted."

Maurice's eyes suddenly sparkled with excitement, and a deep colour rushed into his face. "I understand it all," he cried; "you are going to marry the Count de Mirasole. I have seen him, Gertrude, a miserable being, utterly unworthy of you. I was told in London that he was your destined husband, and shuddered at the thought. But he has rank and wealth, and pride like your father's."

"So help me Heaven, they may kill me, but I

will not marry him. And yet to dwell at Lifford Grange,—my mother's living grave——”

There was a pause ; neither of them spoke, but a tumultuous rush of feelings was invading his heart as he looked upon her, bowed down with sorrow, and shuddering at the thought of the home she had left. He knelt by her side, and with those eyes which had sought to recall her to life a moment before by the impassioned tenderness of their gaze he tried, as it were, to speak the thought which was struggling in his mind. She partly understood him, for she held out her hand to him, and murmured, “ I am not ungrateful for your sympathy,” and burst into tears. Then trembling with agitation he said,

“ Gertrude, listen to me. We are alone, but never were my feelings so deeply respectful ; for the sake of Heaven do not start at what I am going to say. You will die if you remain at Lifford Grange ; your life will waste away in that gloom and solitude. A slow persecution will

establish itself against you if you refuse to marry the husband of your father's choice. My heart beats so that I can hardly speak. Gertrude, as you once told me to do, I have loved in silence,—I have adored you in hopelessness. I shall love you whether you become the wife of Mirasole, or pine away your life in the dungeon called your home. Pure, as it is ardent—humble, as it is passionate—I dare speak of my love, even here, alone with you ; for you could never mistake a heart that at all times has been yours. If some have hated, I have worshipped you. If some have feebly loved, I have adored you. If others have forsaken, I have clung to you ; and with my soul, and my pen, and my toil, and with what talent Heaven has given me, and with my life, I will serve you, and ask nothing in return but that you will accept that devotion,—that you will let me take you to my mother and to Mary, who will be a mother and a sister to you ; and then ask yourself there, if

without repugnance you can give me the right to live for you. You do not care for rank, thank God,—you have suffered from the pride and the coldness of others. O, Gertrude, will you not try the ardent love of an artist's heart,—of a spirit untrammelled by the barriers that men, and not God, have placed between loving hearts? Will you be my wife,—and fight our way through the world amidst the frowns of its votaries and the sneers of its slaves? Will you see life as it is, or will you return to the cold shadows of existence in which your youth was spent, or be the tool and the victim of your father's pride?"

"Hush, Maurice, hush!" she wildly exclaimed; "you do not know what you are saying."

"I know that I love you as woman has seldom been loved,—that is enough for me. O can it not be enough for you? My Gertrude,—my Lady-Bird, come with me to a home where none but loving eyes will look upon you, none but

loving words be addressed to you. Let me rescue you from the tyranny that has embittered all your life. I do not ask you to love me as I love you. Few love thus; but let me be your husband——”

“My husband!” she exclaimed, “*You!* O leave me,—leave me. What are you talking of, Maurice? Do you not know——” She got up and went towards the door; he turned so deadly pale that she thought he was about to faint. Despair was in his face. “God help me!” she said, “am I breaking his heart, as mine is breaking!” He heard her, and the expression of his eyes changed,—a sudden hope shot through them; again he pleaded, again implored, and a strange conflict arose in her whom he addressed as she listened to his feverish words of tenderness—a passion which soothed her bruised and aching heart. The idea of revenge, too, arose in that proud spirit. To reward a love which had been long as time and patient as faith, to fly from

scenes which seemed to wither her soul as she looked upon them, to brave the prejudices that had been fatal to her peace and the father who had shivered to atoms her happiness, to show Adrien in his serene indifference—his virtuous abstraction—that she too could take a decisive step;—and instead of weeping in solitude over the fate to which he had left her, all this conspired at that moment to bewilder and confuse her. She felt a pining desire to be loved and protected. She felt utterly unequal to meet the struggle that awaited her at Lifford Grange; and the difficulty of returning there at that time of the night, or to account for her long absence, the chance of being obliged to explain it to her father, her horror of the husband he would force upon her,—all this threw weight into the scale in that hour of weakness, of infatuation, and of despair.

Maurice was not designedly artful; he loved her passionately, and to show it was the highest art he could employ; he pleaded with his whole

soul, with his eyes, and with his words; he combated the scruples of her conscience, the misgivings of her heart, with all the arguments which sophistry could furnish and eloquence employ,—blinded all the while by the delirium of passion to the fearful sin he was committing against Heaven and against her. He privately ordered the person who called for the luggage to be in readiness at four with a carriage to take him to the railway. She was fatigued, over-excited, jaded with emotions; she scarcely realised what she was about. She began to fear with a terrible fear that she would be missed at Lifford Grange, and be discovered where she was. Once she had a good inspiration; she insisted for a moment that Maurice should take her to Mr. Erving's house, should show her the way to it at least. But then he might be absent, and what would his servant think? And if she did find him, what could he do but insist on her returning to her father; and that seemed to have grown

beyond her power. At moments she trembled like a leaf. Then again a fierce irritation supported her. She had been sacrificed to the cold heartless pride that had counted her happiness and her misery for nothing; she had been refused to the man she adored, and promised to a stranger, as if she had been a slave, a machine, or a piece of merchandise. But now, when the proud Spaniard would arrive and claim his bride, what would her still prouder father answer? She had fled from his house like a galley-slave from his chain. He had refused Adrien, with his title, his noble blood, and his riches; and she would marry the son of a poor fiddler and of an Italian singer! There would be a blot for ever on that hateful escutcheon, which had been her foe and her bane. A morbid gratitude, a feverish terror, a boundless resentment blinded her. She scarcely looked beyond the present moment, and was conveyed away towards the railway-station, with no definite thought but the fear of

being overtaken. But no one had missed her,—her father had not asked for her. Her maid never attended her in the evening: the tea, which she had lately taken instead of dinner, was carried up to her room and left there. Those who did not see her in her apartments concluded she was in the drawing-room, and those who did not see her there, imagined she was upstairs. It was only in the morning that the truth flashed upon the bewildered servants,—Miss Lifford had not slept in her bed that night. They were informing her father of the fact at the moment when the carriage of the Count of Mirasole was driving up to the door.

CHAPTER II.

“ The real hardened wicked
That know no check but human law,
Are to a few restricted.
But, ah ! mankind is unco weak,
And little to be trusted ;
When self the wavering balance shakes,
It's rarely right adjusted.”

BURNS.

“ The frowardness of rashness is no better
Than a wild dedication of ourselves
To unpath'd waters, undreamt shores ; most certain
To miseries enough ; no hope to help us,
But as we shake off one, to take another.”

SHAKESPEARE.

It was eight o'clock in the morning when the sun was just beginning to make his way through the lingering darkness of a London atmosphere ; when the air felt as raw and chilly as if it had not been shone upon for months ; when the smell

and the taste of fog were pervading every sense, and the hard, dull part of life's business was beginning to stir in the streets, that a hack-cab stopped at a house in one of the streets near Manchester Square. Maurice, who was on the box, jumped down and rang the bell. When a maid opened the door, he sprung up the narrow stairs, and found Mary in the sitting-room. Her bonnet was on, and she was just going out. His sudden appearance did not startle her much, for she expected him that day; but she said,

“So early, Maurice! I did not know you were coming by this train.”

He seized both her hands, and looked at her so strangely that she felt frightened. “What has happened?—What can have happened?”

“Something so extraordinary that at this very moment I am not sure that I am not dreaming. But it is all true—true as I am here; you will hardly believe it. How it has all happened I scarcely understand myself; but Lady-Bird is

with me,—she is in the carriage. She has left her home for ever, and with me !”

Mary turned very pale, and clasped her hands together. “Are you married, Maurice ?”

“No, but we must be married immediately. Come, dearest Mary, and bring her upstairs and take care of her, while I go to get a licence, and speak to a priest.”

Mary went down to the carriage-door, feeling bewildered. It passed through her head that Maurice had gone out of his mind, and that she should not find Gertrude in the carriage. But she was there,—pale and motionless as a marble statue,—looking more like a corpse than a bride. “Miss Lifford ! dear Miss Lifford !” was all she could ejaculate, as she led her upstairs. She made her sit down on the sofa near the fire, and then looked at Maurice with an expression that seemed to ask for an explanation. He knelt by Gertrude, and whispered in a low voice, “She is ill and

cold,—she has suffered so much!” Gertrude opened her arms, and said, “Mary!” in a tone of such intense misery, that though she shed no tears Mary’s streamed down her face while pressing her to her heart. Then Maurice went away, and left them together.

It was a strange interview. Neither was disposed to enter upon explanations. They seemed almost equally miserable. Gertrude, from the moment that she had entered the railway-carriage and had been relieved from the immediate fear of pursuit, had fallen into a sort of stupor that had prevented her thinking over what she had done, or what she was about to do. To draw back was impossible; and this made her impatient for the moment when all would have been gone through, and her fate irrevocably fixed. What could she say to Mary? *Nothing*. It was useless to explain. What had she to explain? Driven almost wild, and from the impulse of the moment seeking a refuge where she alone hoped

to find one, step by step she had been drawn on to the point where she now was, scarcely knowing if she had injured Maurice, or he had wronged her—whether he was the betrayer or the betrayed, and herself saved or undone.

Tired to death she fell asleep on the hard couch, and Mary stood looking at her with a mixture of pity and of grief. “Then she loved him,” she said to herself. “Poor Lady-Bird, she has always loved him! But how have they met? How has this been brought about? So soon after her mother’s death! How will he support her, used as she has been to so many comforts? But perhaps her father may forgive her; though I am afraid he will not. Good Heavens! who would ever have thought this possible? Gertrude Lifford—Lady-Bird—Maurice’s wife! She must have loved him very much to have acted thus. But how could she make up her mind to it? I hope he did not over-persuade her. Will he want me to go to church with

them? Perhaps he will not like to ask me, but I will, and my mother shall go too. It will be a sad wedding."

She put some wood on the fire, and lit a candle, for the fog was getting more yellow and dense every moment. Gertrude's bonnet had fallen on the ground. She picked it up and hung it on the screen, laid her own shawl on her feet; then softly slipped out of the room to go and prepare her mother for this strange arrival. Mrs. Redmond was quite bewildered at the news, and gazed at her daughter in silent astonishment. "Bless my soul!" she ejaculated in a moment; "what odd things do happen! Mary!" This was her resource in all embarrassing moments in life, from a dropped stitch in her work to the greatest event that ever came across her quiet path — "Mary!" — a look at that kind serene face, an appeal to that invariable goodness and sense which she almost superstitiously trusted in. "Mary says it must be done," or

"Mary says there is nothing to fret about," were oracles, which had never found her rebellious or incredulous. "Mary!" Mary knew what that meant, and said gently,

"We feel, dearest mother, that it would have been much better that this had never happened, —that Maurice must have been wrong, and poor Lady-Bird very wrong in acting in this way. I don't know how it has come about. But though they have committed a great fault, it is no crime, mother, and God only knows what excuses they have had. She has been so unhappy at home, and her love for him must be very great to have led her to this; now she must become his wife directly."

"His wife, Mary! I had once thought you would be his wife."

A painful expression for one instant passed over her daughter's face, but it quickly disappeared, and she said: "That was a great mistake, dear mother. Maurice is coming back," she added in

a moment, "with the licence. We must go to church with them, and you must give her your blessing; poor motherless Lady-Bird—no father will give her away—no mother will stand near her. O, she has done very wrong; but had I been in her place, who knows that I should have had strength to act differently?" Her voice faltered as she said the last words, but Mrs. Redmond was satisfied. Mary had said it was all a mistake her fancying that Maurice had ever loved her. Mary had said that Maurice and Gertrude had been very wrong in running away together, but that there were probably what the French tribunals would call *des circonstances atténuantes*, and that she, Mrs. Redmond, was to give them her blessing and be kind to them; and that was quite enough for her,—Mary must be right.

Poor Mary did not feel so sure of being right. She asked herself if she ought not to put more questions, to learn more of what had happened,

to advise Gertrude to pause and to reflect before she irrevocably bound herself to one whose worldly position was so inferior to hers, and set at defiance her father who, cold and heartless as he had been, was still her father. She thought of her aged uncle also, and the sorrow and indignation he would feel at the news of this strange marriage. She had an instinctive feeling that after such a flight, and such a journey, a return to her home would be impossible; but could not she pause for a while, and take advice before this rash act was completed? But again, how could *she* stand between Maurice and the happiness he was on the point of attaining? If by her advice she induced Gertrude to retrace her steps, and give time to her father to claim her,—if she and Maurice were forcibly separated, and made quite miserable,—would not she have incurred a great responsibility? She was well acquainted with Mr. Lifford's character. He would never forgive his daughter, but would

move heaven and earth to prevent what he must consider a disgraceful marriage. What a destiny her interference might be preparing for Gertrude! —What misery, what despair for Maurice! And was she sure enough of her own heart, not to mistrust its motives in this hour of trial? Maurice adored Gertrude, and she also most dearly loved him. They would have to toil and to struggle, but their devotion to each other would sweeten those toils and struggles. What business had she to interfere? Faint, tired, and agitated as she was, a word might sway Gertrude, and the consequences might be important beyond what she knew. No, there was no time for advice, for anything but endurance and prayer. She would stand by that suffering, pale bride, and leave the future in the hands of God.

With that resolution she returned to the room where she had left her. Gertrude awoke and shivered a little. Then got up and walked up and down the room, and as she looked out of

the window said in an absent manner, "And this is London?" Then returning to her place on the sofa, she sat silently contemplating the fire. Some tea was brought, of which she took a little, and then said to Mary, "Did you ever hear of a daughter marrying a fortnight after her mother's death?" The colour rushed into Mary's face; she knew not what to answer. "Yours is not an ordinary marriage," she hesitatingly said. Her heart was aching dreadfully. She felt much that she dared not utter. There were religious duties which both ought to have accomplished before receiving the marriage blessing. Did they know this? Had they forgotten it? She was just about to speak, when a rap at the door made them both start. "Remember," Gertrude exclaimed, with a wild expression, "that I am of age, and that no power on earth shall induce me to return to Lifford Grange."

"It is only the postman's knock," Mary said,

and an instant afterwards she heard Maurice's voice in the passage. "He is come back, is he!" Gertrude ejaculated. It was some minutes before he came upstairs. He had gone into the room below. When he entered the one where Gertrude and Mary were sitting, he was as pale as death. The expression of his face—his whole manner—were changed from what they had been, when he had arrived that morning. Then, in the midst of agitation and emotion, there was joy and hope; but now his eyes had a dark and troubled expression, and he seemed in a kind of agony of irresolution. Passion and conscience were at that moment waging war in his soul. The one was fierce and the other weak, and the combat was unequal. He approached Gertrude and twice he tried to speak, but his voice failed him. She did not observe it, and it was she who said at last, "Is all ready?" perhaps with a sensation akin to that with which that question has been asked at the foot

of the scaffold. He had an instinctive knowledge that at that moment the words of passion and of tenderness, which had wrought so powerfully on her feelings the day before, would be displeasing to her. Nor could he now pour them forth out of the fulness of a heart which, weak and guilty as it had been, till this hour had been true in its devotion to her. He could only seize her hand, and articulate the word "Come." Mary whispered to him, "I will call my mother; we are both going with you." When she returned with Mrs. Redmond, Gertrude turned away with her cheeks burning, and her lips quivering. The old woman went to her, took her hand in both hers and murmured, "My dear young lady—my dear child." "*My mother!*" Gertrude exclaimed, as if her heart was breaking, "*O my mother!*" then suddenly became calm and said—"Now I am ready, let us go." They all went in one carriage, and through the foggy streets to the chapel.

Mary said to herself, "And this is Maurice's wedding-day?"

And what did he feel during that time? Like the gambler, when the decisive card is about to be played,—when the winning horse is nearing the goal. In another moment Gertrude would be his, and no earthly power might put asunder those who would then have been joined together. When the ceremony was over, and they were returned to the house in King Street, she suffered from such a violent headache, and appeared so ill, that Mrs. Redmond insisted on making her rest on the sofa, and giving her some draught of her own preparation to drink; desiring Maurice and Mary not to disturb her for a while, for that her pulse was so quick and her hands so burning, that unless great care were taken of her she might be seriously ill. Maurice knelt by the sofa, kissed both her hands, and then her forehead. He could hardly realise that she was indeed his wife. It was like a feverish

dream, from which he fancied every moment he must awake. She neither stirred nor spoke a word,—till hearing him sigh deeply as he rose from his knees, she opened her eyes and held out her hand to him. He passionately kissed it again and again. She said, "I will try to make a good wife to you, Maurice." "Idol of my heart!" he exclaimed. "No, no," she murmured; "it is wrong to have idols." Then, oppressed with fatigue and heaviness, she fell asleep. He went down to the little parlour below, where Mary was sitting with her work in her hands—hands that were never idle, however busy her thoughts.

"You, too, must be very tired, brother," she said as he came in. When they were children it had been her habit to call him so, and during the last few months she had gradually resumed it. "But I suppose you are too much agitated, too happy, to sleep. Sit down in that arm-chair, and tell me the history of this strange event. I long to know, Maurice, what I feel persuaded

of beforehand—that you have been both as little to blame as possible.”

“O, Mary, she came to the cottage last night, in all her beauty, and in the deepest grief. Her mother’s grave was scarcely closed, and her own tears undried, when her father attempted to force upon her acceptance the hand of a total stranger, who was to arrive this very day. She had gone through a dreadful scene with him; and distracted by his unkindness, she fled like a wounded bird to the only friends who had always loved her. She expected to find you and mother, and fainted away with fatigue and the anguish of disappointment, when I was forced to tell her you were gone. What could I do then? I dared not leave her, nor summon any one to her assistance. We remained there together, and the time passed by. When she came to herself, her tears flowed bitterly, and I implored her to confide in me. She trembled, and spoke of her grief and loneliness, and I saw

her shudder when she thought of returning to Lifford Grange; and then it was not in man's nature to refrain from offering her a refuge, from making the confession of a love——" He hesitated; he could not but remember how often he had told Mary that he loved *her*, that he would never love any but her; and the sense of his ingratitude, and of the angelic patience with which she had met it, almost overcame him at that moment. But she looked at him calmly, and taking up his words, she said,

"And you forgot everything but that love which you had so long struggled to repress. You forgot that you ought not to have revealed it at such a moment. You were tempted, Maurice, and you yielded to the temptation. It seemed to you, perhaps, in that moment of agitation, that it was right to offer her your heart as a refuge, and this poor home as a shelter; and when you found that she loved you, in the joy of that discovery——"

An ashy paleness overspread Maurice's face as Mary pronounced these words, and he murmured in hesitating accents, "I hope she loves me."

Like a flash of lightning the thought passed through her mind, that perhaps he was not certain of it, and had too readily taken advantage of her distress of mind, her dread of returning home,—of her sufferings, in short,—to persuade her to a step, that nothing but a strong affection on both sides could palliate or excuse. This was a dreadful moment for Mary. She started at the vision of past sin and future misery which was suggesting itself to her mind, and she exclaimed :

"But you did not over-persuade her, Maurice? You gave her time to reflect—to pause? O, for Heaven's sake tell me you did so!"

"There was no time for deliberation," he rejoined with increasing vehemence, as he saw her emotion. "Do you think that at such a

moment a man is in the full possession of his senses? I described my love and my despair till she allowed me to speak of her future fate also—I told her what it would be if she remained at Lifford Grange. I argued away her scruples,—Heaven knows my own reasonings seemed just to me at the time. She had once told me to love her on, and to bide my time—and the time seemed to be come. I believe she loves me. I am sure she does.”

He got up and walked about the room with impetuosity. Mary remained silent; her misgivings were not removed; but she felt it was done, it was over, it was irrevocable,—and nothing remained but the hope that God in His infinite mercy would bring good out of evil, should her worst fears be realised; but she also knew there was such a thing as *retribution*, and her heart sunk within her. She kept her eyes fixed on the ground, scarcely venturing to look in his face.

"If I have done wrong," he began.

"If! O Maurice," she rejoined, in a tone that pierced him to the soul; for if she condemned him already, what would she have felt and said if she had known what no other creature but himself did know,—a secret that was lodged in his breast, never to be revealed to her or to any one; but which, like a thorn, was to dwell there, while his writhings would only serve to drive it in more deeply.

Both feared to say more about the past. Each had understood more than the other had expressed in words, and a painful silence ensued. She communed with herself; and knowing his character, felt it necessary to encourage him to look forward with resolution to the future. "Speak to them that they go *forward*." This sentence of the Bible had fixed itself in Mary's mind when she was very young, as a sort of spell that carried her along through discouragements and trial, as if borne upon an angel's

wing. It stifled regrets, self-pity, self-indulgence, and braced every nerve for the duty or the struggle of the hour; and now she felt it to be a greater duty to urge him to future efforts, and atoning virtues, than to reproach him for the past.

"You are now," she said, "Gertrude's husband, her protector, her sole support; for the world will be against her, and not much mercy will it show to either of you. I do not say this to discourage you, God knows, but to excite you to be all to her that a husband can be to a wife who has given up everything for him. Hers is not a common claim on your love. O Maurice, dearest brother, begin well this new life of yours. You will need God's blessing upon it,—seek it day by day at his feet, and then work hard for Gertrude; dear Lady-Bird must not want a single comfort which our labour can obtain." He pressed her hand, and both were again for a few minutes absorbed in thought. Then (for there are a

thousand little necessary details of life which assert their claims even in the most exciting moments) she said to him, "Where shall you live Maurice? Here I hope; at least, just now."

"Will it be possible, Mary?"

"Quite possible. There are two rooms upstairs which you can have; and I should think just at first, that as you know little, and Lady-Bird nothing, about house-keeping, it will be a good thing for her to have somebody to manage little arrangements, and to supply the place of her maid; I can lend her some clothes, also until——"

"O Mary, here is my purse, for Heaven's sake, buy whatever she may want."

"No indeed, my dear Maurice, you have been tolerably well off as a single man during the last two years, but as a married man you must be very prudent. It is likely that even should Mr. Lifford cast off his daughter, he will send her what was her own until now. Then, again, there is some-

thing which I think you should carefully avoid, and that is proposing any change in your wife's habits of life. Any such alteration should come from herself alone, and not be suggested by you, or by us. Most likely she will wish to dress less expensively—indeed it will be inevitable if her father does not contribute to your support—but it would not be desirable that you should procure for her less costly things than she has been used to. If hers are not sent to her, it will be time enough then for you to explain to her candidly the amount of your resources, and to let her decide on the line she will adopt in these respects.”

“ Mary, you are a little Solomon,” Maurice said with a smile, but it was one which was soon followed by a deep sigh. For what would he not have given to have been able to surround his wife with all the comforts and pleasures and luxuries of life? and he looked with loathing at the narrow dull rooms, the dingy walls and comfortless fur-

niture of that poor lodging-house. If indeed he had been convinced that she loved him, all would have been well. On that day, at least, he would have given care to the winds, and have bade defiance to the frowns of fortune; but such love as his was too clear-sighted long to deceive itself; although he strove to persuade himself,—in spite of former jealous suspicions, and of a startling confirmation which they had received that very day—that she did love him, and that her heart had prompted the rash act she had committed: still, as he repassed in his mind the scenes of that eventful day, he could not recall one glance of real love, one word that set at rest the terrible misgivings of an awakening conscience and a torturing jealousy.

Mary meanwhile was as busy as a bee. She concluded with the mistress of the house the bargain for the rooms upstairs, and set about helping the maid to give them a thorough cleaning. The pale sun was beginning to conquer the fog,

and she threw open the window to let in that transient ray. Every bit of furniture that could be considered ornamental was transferred from her mother's room and her own to Gertrude's. Every picture and print she possessed was hung on the walls. There were some that Maurice had brought her from Italy, and which used to be her treasures. One in particular, a pretty engraving of the Madonna di Foligno, before which she had ever since said her prayers. She hesitated an instant, but then thought that those prayers would have been poured forth to little purpose if they had not prepared her to part with everything that referred to a time she must now never remember. One fervent kiss was pressed on the sacred feet of the Virgin's child, and then the picture was placed where the light would best fall upon it. Her prettiest looking books were ranged on the shelves—several little knick-knacks were laid on the table. When the fire was lit, and the flame burned brightly, she thought the room looked cheerful;

and cheerfully she had worked, in spite of the aching of her heart—for it was aching, notwithstanding every effort—it was aching more than any one could have conceived. Many a woman with such a suffering heart would have been drowned in tears. Many another, who had loved, and did still love like her, would have turned from Maurice with bitter resentment, and from Gertrude with cold severity : but people are very different, and there are different ways of showing feeling. Mary's was to work very hard for the runaway pair all that day, and for a few minutes in the afternoon to pray fervently for them before the altar where they had been married.

“To be left alone for ten minutes,” this, it was said, was the first request of a young Queen upon coming to the throne. In the most different situations, under the most different emotions, that wish, that aspiration has been felt. It was Gertrude's passionate desire on the day after her

marriage to be left alone for a while, and to reflect on all she had not ventured to think of while her fate was not yet irrevocably fixed. She had been used all her life to the vast lofty rooms of Lifford Grange, to its park and its gardens ; and whenever either sorrow or excitement oppressed her, she seemed to find relief in the space that she could range in, and in the power of rapid movement which it afforded her. She was absolutely stifled by the atmosphere of London, by the closeness of the small house in which she found herself. Even when the door of her own room was shut, she could hear voices and steps, below and above her. And if a louder sigh than usual escaped her, if after an instant's silent weeping a sob burst from her breast, Maurice rushed anxiously back to her side and asked if she was grieving at having made him happy ; and she was obliged to give him her hand, and to endeavour to reassure him by a smile. She felt the scrutiny of his eyes upon her every moment, and

asked herself if people had ever been driven mad by being watched? In the afternoon of that day she told him she had a task to perform which would cost her much suffering, and for which she wished to be alone. It was to write to her father, and to inform him of her marriage. She did not say she would show him her letter. He had thought they might have written it together; but this seemed never to have occurred to her. He went out to walk a little with Mary. Gertrude looked from the window, and saw them turning the corner of the street. Then, for the first time since her mother's death, she gave way to an uncontrolled and vehement burst of crying, and murmured in a choking voice, "What have I done?—What have I done? O my God! what have I done?" After a few moments she felt calmer, and sat down to write. This was her letter:—

"King Street, Manchester Square.

"I do not write to ask your forgiveness, for

I well know you never will forgive me, nor to relieve you from any anxiety about my life, for I know you would rather hear of my death than of the marriage I have made, but only to save you the trouble of making inquiries, which would give you needless trouble. That I was born to be a curse to you I cannot but feel. That you have made my life a curse to me, may be no more than I deserve. I do not reproach you now. Two days ago I had, perhaps, a right to complain. Now I have none. It would be impertinent in me to say I forgive you, and yet as I do not expect you will ever choose to see or to hear from me again, I should like to say it as if on my deathbed. I forgive you for never having loved me, nor looked kindly upon me in my youth. I forgive you for having driven me to offend you beyond the possibility of forgiveness, for having tempted me to take my fate into my own hands, and incur the sin and misery of disobedience

without the excuse of passion. Your anger will be great: I do not say it will not be just. For the sake of my mother, of her long sufferings, of her recent death, one only favour I ask of you. Do not curse me, my father, when I tell you that I am Maurice Redmond's wife."

She did not sign this letter, but hurriedly sealed and directed it. Two days after, as Mary had expected, several trunks arrived containing everything that had belonged to Gertrude at Lifford Grange. It was the only sign that her letter had been received. As Mary was unpacking her clothes and ranging them in the drawers, while she sat watching her with a kind of mechanical attention, the latter held out to her a sheet of paper which had been laid at the bottom of the trunk; as she did so, some drawings which it contained fell to the ground. She saw her copy of the Duke of Gandia's picture, with the words written under it, and gave a sort of scream which

startled Mary, who on turning round saw her standing over the fire while the flame was consuming that drawing, and she was murmuring to herself the Latin words,

*"Dies iræ, dies illa,
Solvat sæclum in favillâ."*

When the last blackened remnant of the sheet of paper turned to ashes, she said in a louder voice, "That always reminds me of the hymn on the Day of Judgment,

*'When shrivelling like a parched scroll,
The flaming heavens together roll.'*"

Mary resumed her labours, and laid on the table a gorgeous case with an embossed crest, containing the necklace which Gertrude's father had given her. She gazed upon it for a moment in silence, and then asked,

"Did you ever read a novel called 'Love and Pride,' Mary?"

"No, what made you think of it now?"

"I don't know—that diamond necklace perhaps."

"*You* had to choose between them," Mary kindly said, "and you chose love, not pride."

Gertrude turned to the window and made no answer.

CHAPTER III.

— ♦ —
 "O could'st thou but know,

With what a deep devotedness of woe,
 I wept [his] absence o'er and o'er again,
 Thinking of [him], still him, till thought grew pain ;
 Did'st thou but know how pale I sat at home,
 My eyes still turned the way [he] was to come,
 And all the long long nights of hope and fear,
 [His] voice and step still sounding in my ear.
 Oh God ! thou would'st not wonder that at last,
 When every hope was all at once o'er cast,
 This wretched brain gave way.

MOORE.

"Our God, the all just,

Unto himself reserves this royalty ;
 The secret chastening of the guilty soul,
 The fiery touch, the scourge that purifies,
 Leave it with him."

MRS. HERMANS.

THE first time that Gertrude walked out with
 her husband the dreamlike feeling that had
 haunted her since her marriage was stronger

than ever. It seemed as if a sponge had been passed over the whole of her previous life. Lifford Grange, her parents, Audley Park and Woodlands, Lady Clara, Mark Apley, Mr. Latimer, and even Adrien himself, appeared like recollections of some other state of existence, totally unconnected with what now surrounded her; exhausted by recent excitement the power of suffering seemed dulled within her. She did not feel just then any poignant regrets—Adrien was lost to her; that was not so much a regret as the destruction of one part of her being. The spring was broken, at least she fancied so, and perhaps suffered less where she was than she would have done at home or elsewhere. London appeared to her like a great hive in which millions of creatures buzzed about without disturbing her. It was better to gaze at people moving along the streets than to have nothing to look at. She sat a great deal at the window, and Mary fancied that when

Maurice was out she was watching for his return. Now and then she said something in her old way—something droll that made them all laugh; but the sound of their laughter always seemed to make her grave again.

Maurice—like her—was in a strange state of mind. There were moments when he looked upon her with transport, and almost went wild with joy at knowing she was his wife. But his happiness was far from being perfect. She was not exactly cold to him; but yet there was something in her that prevented his feeling at his ease, and this was a most irritating consciousness to a husband. She never consulted him about anything—never gave or asked advice on any point. She had never evinced in her manner any sense of a disparity of rank between them at any time, but he thought her manner might have been different now from what it was. Had she been proud, or petulant, or unkind to him he would almost have felt

relieved. To a man who adored her nothing was so trying as her calm self-possession. He never ventured to talk to her about affairs or business. She never made a single remark or asked a question about their future plans or the extent of his resources. Mary told him once or twice that he must leave off sending excuses to his pupils, and begin again giving lessons,—that his avocations as an organist and a composer were not sufficient to rely upon,—that he was to make hay while the sun shone, and not allow the grass to grow under his feet. Little Mary had a lurking Sancho-like love of proverbial sayings, and they often made part of her exhortations to Maurice.

“You must also go on with your opera,” she said. “You must make yourself a name in the world by your talents. Lady-Bird in marrying you gave up all worldly considerations; but a day may come when even in that way she may feel proud of her husband. Depend upon

it, Maurice, it will not do to cross your hands, and sit for hours looking at her beautiful eyes. Your love must be a spur—not an opiate.”

“Why does not she talk to me as you do, Mary? I could do wonders if she took an interest in what I did.”

“She does not know you yet as I do, nor how you require to be kept up to the mark, how fond you are of going to sleep on your oars.”

“Mary, do you think she loves me?”

“I think that is a wicked question, Maurice. When a woman has given up everything for you and broken through every obstacle to become your wife, it is unpardonable to doubt that she loves you.”

“Given up everything for me—for *me*! that I could think so!”

“Maurice,” Mary exclaimed, almost angrily, “if you begin self-tormenting in that way, and so soon, you will make yourself wretched and your wife also.”

“ Did you see how pale she turned yesterday, when somebody called her Mrs. Redmond ? ”

“ That was perfectly natural. The sort of way in which she married cannot be always pleasant for her to think of, however she may love you.”

“ Do you think she looks as if she loved me ? Have you ever seen a woman, married to a man she loved, so pale and so silent ? ”

“ But, Maurice, remember her deep mourning, her mother's death, her father's anger, the thoughts she must have about her brother and Father Lifford's return. Do you think all that likely to make her gay ? ”

“ If she loved me as I adore her, the whole world might hate and abuse me, every human being perish around us, and I would clasp her to my heart, and be the happiest of men.”

“ No,” Mary said in a tone in which there was a little indignation. “ No, I do not think she loves you in that way.”

"I think she *could* love in that way," he murmured to himself, and then muttered still more indistinctly, "*Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne me rendra fou.*"

About ten days after Gertrude's marriage, Maurice had gone to give some lessons. He had told her the day before of his intention of doing so, in a hesitating manner, fancying it might annoy her to be reminded that he must thus gain his livelihood. He was half relieved and half disappointed at the way in which she took it, as a matter of total indifference to her. At dinner she reverted to the subject, and asked some joking questions about his pupils. There was not a grain of one kind of pride in her composition. If he had told her he was going to turn shoemaker, she would not have cared much. On the morning in question she and Mary went and took a long walk in Hyde Park. Her spirits were a little better than usual, and walking fast seemed to exhilarate her. Meanwhile

Mrs. Redmond was at home working at a carpet rug, and thinking of her flowers at the cottage, of her tisanes, her rose-water, and her elder wine, and wondering if the present occupant of the garden was as fond of it as she used to be, and then why everybody became so pale in London. Mary and Maurice and Gertrude all looked wan and thin since they had been in town; it was a great pity they could not live in the country. It was of no use to think of that now, and yet she made certain matter-of-fact castles or rather cottages in the air, which amused her and made the time pass quickly.

About an hour after Gertrude and Mary had left the house, and when she was beginning to expect their return, the door was thrown open, and to her amazement, Father Lifford and Edgar walked into the room. A pair of ghosts could not have startled Mrs. Redmond more. Her knitting and her spectacles fell on her knees, and she looked the very picture of consternation. Not

having foreseen such a casualty, it had never occurred to her to inquire if Gertrude's marriage was a secret; she was sensible that a great fault had been committed, and that an agitating discovery was at hand; and her tender heart and illogical understanding led her to feel herself, by some means or other, implicated in the offence; and she would have been capable of accusing herself of it and imploring Father Lifford's pardon, just as if she had not been as guiltless of the whole affair as the babe unborn, an individual whom she was often in the habit of alluding to. She remained gazing at her visitor, as if the floor and not the door had opened to introduce him. He put a chair for himself next to hers, which obliged her to sit down, while Edgar,—who always looked stiff,—placed himself opposite. They had arrived that morning from Spain by a different ship than the one they had intended to sail in, and finding no letters in town, Father Lifford had proposed to call at Maurice's lodgings,

with the hope of hearing from him what were the last accounts from the Grange.

“ Well, Mrs. Redmond,” he began, “ I hardly expected to find you in London, though we knew of your intended removal. How are you ?—and how is Mary ?—and Maurice, is he getting on well ? ”

“ As well as can be expected, dear sir,” she answered, not feeling certain that he was ignorant of the late event, and adopting that useful phrase, as a safe one in any case.

“ You have a nice house, I see,” Edgar remarked, a thing which people often say of houses where they would hate to live themselves.

“ There is not quite room enough for us——” she began, and then trembled as if they knew exactly how many rooms there were, and that it would have been large enough if Maurice had not married.

“ Where is Mary ? ” Father Lifford asked ; “ I have brought her a little present from Spain.”

"Oh, you are too good," Mrs. Redmond ejaculated, and was going to add, "she does not deserve it," so strong was her impression of their being all involved in Maurice's delinquency.

She took to praying mentally that they might go before Gertrude and Mary returned ; and what with these mental prayers and her deafness, the conversation did not go on briskly.

Father Lifford said, "We are only just landed, and were glad enough to arrive after our wretched passage. We started several days before our appointed time, and must have missed our letters. I hope we shall find his poor mother pretty well, but I did not quite like the last accounts of her."

Now poor Mrs. Redmond's agitation increased. They did not know of Mrs. Lifford's death. Then they knew nothing. Then everybody must give themselves up for lost. This was her only impression, and she looked so perturbed that Father Lifford perceived it, and a sudden fear shot through his heart. A presentiment

of sorrow had haunted him during the journey ; it was doubtless mercifully sent to prepare him for the evil of that day, which indeed was to be abundantly sufficient for it.

He was looking from Edgar to Mrs. Redmond, afraid of questioning her, and receiving an answer which might be too sudden a blow for the dull but affectionate boy, who had no fear or misgiving on the subject. He took snuff ; he got up and examined a print on the chimney ; and then said, " Edgar, is our cab waiting for us ? Just open the window and see." The boy got up to do so, but before he reached it the door opened, and Gertrude, in her deep mourning, entered.

There are moments in life which no pen can describe, as there are effects of light in the heavens which no pencil can render. She came in ; her eyes met the eyes of the old man who had been her mother's only friend. She neither fainted nor screamed, but a sort of convulsion

passed over her face, and throwing open the door of the back room, she cried, "Here, here, and with you alone." He followed her mechanically, and sat down, for his limbs could hardly support him. She hid her face on the side of the arm-chair into which he had fallen, and murmured, "For her sake who died in my arms and who prayed for me with her last breath, do not spurn me now!" The old man tried to raise her head with his trembling hand, but not succeeding he laid it upon her forehead and said, "God's will be done, my child. She is dead, then, your poor mother." Surprised, she raised her head for a moment, and in her paleness and her suffering looked so like her whom he spoke of, that his stout heart gave way, and turning away from her he wept, but held out his hand, which she seized and covered with kisses.

"Perhaps for the last time," she again murmured, for she felt he knew nothing; and then suddenly letting it go, she stood before him pale,

resolute, and stern:—"You are weeping, but there is greater suffering in store for you than you are now enduring."

"What do you mean, Gertrude? Has anything happened to your father? Good heavens! why are you here?—have you lost him too? For God's sake, speak!"

"He is alive," she said hurriedly; "he is alive: nothing has happened to him, but——"

"But what, but what, Gertrude? You terrify me!"

"I have left him for ever, and have married Maurice Redmond, — not from love, but from despair." She added the last words in a whisper that to the ears of the listener sounded fearfully distinct; and then she stood again silent and motionless, as if awaiting her sentence. He was silent, too; but the veins in his forehead were swelled to bursting, and his eyes glared from beneath his bushy eyebrows; his hands trembled; he tried to get up, but, unable to

stand, fell back on the chair and groaned deeply.

“Gertrude,” he hoarsely ejaculated, “did you abandon your mother? Did you kill her, unhappy child?”

“Abandon *her!* I have told you she died in my arms. Her last words were a blessing; her last embrace, her last look were mine. I have nothing left but that recollection; nothing but the memory of that hour. She was left to me,—to my love, to my tears, to my solitary watchings, till she was borne to her grave: and then I was alone; and grief, passion, and despair wrought like madness in my brain. He robbed me of all earthly hope; he forced a husband upon me on the very morrow of my mother’s funeral; he drove me wild, and accidentally—yes, I swear it, accidentally—I met with one who has always loved me. It is too long to tell how I was tempted,—drawn on by the power of that love which had been true and constant, when every

other had failed me, and which at that moment offered me a refuge. I fled with him, I married him, and I am cast off,—even by *you*!” she exclaimed; for Father Lifford had risen, and seemed about to leave the room without a glance or a word.

There was a terrible struggle in his heart. His naturally proud and violent character was asserting itself at that moment. She had degraded her family and her name; she had dishonoured her mother’s memory; thrown a slur on her father’s character, and had been true and just to none; for he knew she had married one man while she loved another, and he was at that moment aware that the noblest and truest heart in the world was hers; he possessed the proofs of that devoted affection, and his very compassion for her miserable destiny augmented at first the bitterness of his wrath. He could have cursed her for the rash self-destruction she had wrought, and for an instant he felt it impossible to look at

or to speak to her. But he was a priest; and what to him, as such, were family ties, and honour, and reputation? What was her own earthly happiness, or that of others, that it should move him thus? What concern had he with aught in comparison with her soul—her immortal soul? Would violence awaken contrition for the past? Would contempt soften a hardened heart, or awake from despondency a prostrate courage? He prayed for calmness, for patience, for meekness. He bade himself forget that it was Gertrude Lifford that was standing before him. He forced himself to look upon her as he would have done on any suffering and penitent woman whom it was his duty to exhort, advise, and console. Gravely and calmly he turned towards her, and said,

“Gertrude, my child, you repent of your sin? of having forsaken your home? of having abandoned your father?”

“No, Father Lifford,—no. I will speak the

truth. I cannot deceive you,—not even to obtain kind looks or words which I long for; more than I can express. I do repent of having married poor Maurice,”—here she again dropped her voice, and spoke in that painful whispering tone,—“of having married him without any sentiment but gratitude. And I do not even always feel that. He might have seen how distracted I was; he ought not to have married me without asking me if I loved him. But it is wrong and ungenerous to say this. Mine has been the fault; let mine alone be the penalty, if possible. I repent of having wronged *him*, I repent of having grieved and offended you, but as to my father, he has more need of my forgiveness than I of his; *he* has broken my heart,—I have only wounded his pride.”

He gazed upon her, and she trembled under that silent reproach. “Poor child!” he said at last, “God deals with you in His secret way; through much sorrow He will bring you to His

feet. You will not know one instant's peace, till you have forgotten, in the depths of self-abasement, that others have sinned against you. The day when you will implore from your father a pardon you perhaps never will receive, may be the turning point in your destiny,—not for time but for eternity."

"Do *you* forgive me?" she said.

"There is no question of my forgiveness, my child: as your father's uncle I dare not say I forgive you, and your brother shall leave this house without speaking to one who has brought shame and sorrow upon his home. He must obtain his father's permission before he sees you, Gertrude. But, O my child, what have I to do but to call thee, not to my feet, but to my arms; to hold thee for an instant to my heart, while I implore that merciful God whom I have served from my youth up to bless thee. My life will not be long ——"

"Do not die, Father Lifford, do not die," she

convulsively ejaculated, while she hid her face on his arm.

“ If I am never to see you again, my child —”

“ O, but you will see me. You said you would not discard me. I will not let you go if you do not promise to see me again.”

“ As much as man can promise it, Gertrude, I do ; be calm, and listen to me. I fear for you other reckless moments of what you may call despair, or a weak sinking under the weight you have chosen to carry. It is a heavy cross you have taken up, my child, but it may be a school for the highest virtues : you were rich, and you have embraced poverty ; you were proud, and you have disgraced yourself for ever ; you loved, and you have put an eternal barrier between yourself and ——”

“ *He* did, *he* did,” she murmured ; “ I cannot think of that now. *There, there* was the feeling that maddened me. *He* did it, not I.”

Father Lifford saw that she had fancied herself

forsaken by Adrien, and felt he must not at that moment undeceive her. "You have entered," he went on, "on the most thorny and difficult path that a woman can tread, but in proportion to your trials let your courage rise. From heroic virtue such a life of privation and obscurity might have been adopted. Act as if you, out of virtue, had sought it. Accept the destiny you have chosen, and devote yourself to your husband as if you loved him; and forgive him, Gertrude, all that I can scarcely forgive. Remember that *his* excuse—and in your eyes at least it should now be one—is the love which blinded him to the fearful sin he was committing. Henceforward, my child, fulfil every duty with patient humility; toil with your hands and with your whole heart, and if needs be, endure hunger and fatigue. Expiate the past, and at each trial you may encounter, look down, and feel that yours is the fault, but also look upward, and believe that the lesson comes from God."


In this stern advice there was something suitable to Gertrude's present state of mind. It wanted softening on the one hand, and bracing on the other. This interview had, for a time, that double effect upon her. Once more Father Lifford blessed her, and allowed her this time to kneel to receive his blessing; then he left her, and called Edgar as he passed through the other room. He took his arm as they walked down stairs, and refused to let him speak. Mrs. Redmond had abruptly left him alone when Gertrude had drawn Father Lifford away, and the poor boy's eyes were red with weeping; for he had guessed, from her mourning, that his mother was dead. He could not conceive why he was hurried away in this manner. When they got into the carriage his forebodings were realised, and the cause of that abrupt departure explained. The grief, the horror, the amazement which succeeded one another on his usually tranquil face were remarkable. He spoke with such severity of his sister's

conduct that his uncle was obliged to say, "Come, Edgar, you could not say more if she had committed a crime." And when he wept over his father's fate, and the dreadful blow which had fallen upon him, speaking of him as if he had been the kindest of parents, and in the strongest terms of his sister's ingratitude, again Father Lifford coughed and moved uneasily in his place.

"He is much to be pitied, and you must do all in your power to comfort him, and to soften him towards Gertrude. And remember, Edgar, when you marry and have children, be always kind and affectionate to them, and do not fancy that all the faults are on one side, when such sad events occur in families. Edgar, my boy, when I was teaching you the Catechism, I do not think I spoke to you enough about the dreadful sin of *pride*. If we all had been less proud, this might not have happened. Alas! when we draw near to the grave, we see things in a different light, even when we have tried to act

rightly during life. Let us try never to mistake our vices for virtues."

When they arrived at home, Mr. Lifford met them with his usual manner. He embraced his son, and shook hands with his uncle ; and saying a few words about his wife's death, which made Edgar weep, he gave each of them some things she had bequeathed to them. Not a single allusion did he make to Gertrude. Her picture had been removed from the drawing-room, and the old butler had taken possession of it. He silently pointed it out one day to Father Lifford, who sighed deeply, and said, " Will you lend it me for a little while?" and had it hung up in his room. He was not well, and seldom left it now. Edgar often came to sit with him, and he showed him much affection, but the old man's heart was sad and heavy. The patient suffering mother, where was she? In Heaven, he trusted, and felt consoled. The reckless and beautiful child, where was she? Tossed by the roughest waves



of life ; drifting along on the world's wide sea. But she was breasting the billows and might yet reach the haven, and that thought gave him comfort. But where was the man whom he had loved in his youth,—the son of his brother, whom he had nursed on his knees? He was near him, but on what road? A traitor to his God, for he was called a Catholic, and was one only in name,—the destroyer of his wife, for he had blighted her life, and embittered her death,—the author of his daughter's misery, for he had driven her to despair, and goaded her to sin. On what road was he then? The road to destruction. The old man prayed for him ; for the faith that sleeps may yet live again, and the love that is cold may yet warm again, and the heart that is hard may soften or break.

He prayed a great deal in the chapel and elsewhere. He sometimes went to sit alone in the room which had been Mrs. Lifford's. Once he raised his eyes to a picture, which reminded

him of something in the past, and groaning in spirit, he exclaimed, "O child, child! if thou hadst known——" and then stopped short. He missed her at meals, he missed her in the drawing-room, in the chapel, in the gardens. Her voice, her smile, her faults, her follies—he missed them all. He grew very ill, and knew that he was dying. Then he sent for his nephew, and talked to him a long time; and when Mr. Lifford left the room, he was paler than when his wife expired—paler than when his daughter fled. The old priest died, and his grave was made near to Mrs. Lifford's. He bequeathed the little he possessed to Gertrude, and sent her his blessing, through Mr. Erving, who had attended him in his last moments. Soon after his death, the establishment at the Grange was broken up, and Mr. Lifford and his son went to travel abroad.

When Gertrude received the news of her uncle's death, she experienced a sensation of

such utter desolation that it prostrated for a while all her powers of exertion. But the resolutions she had made after her last interview with him were confirmed ; and when she recovered from the indisposition which had followed that severe shock, all the listlessness of her manner had disappeared, and an expression of stern endurance and energetic self-reliance had taken its place.

CHAPTER IV.

" No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels ;
 No cure for such, till God who makes them heals.
 And thou, sad sufferer, under nameless ill
 That yields not to the touch of human skill,
 To thee the dayspring, and the blaze of noon,
 The purple evening, and resplendent moon
 Shine not ; or undesired, or hated shine,
 Seen through the medium of a cloud like thine.
 Yet seek *Him*, in His favour life is found ;
 All bliss beside a shadow or a cloud ;
 Then Heaven eclipsed so long, and this dull earth,
 Shall seem to start into a second birth."

COWPER.

" Never did thine eye
 Look on me but in glistening tenderness ;
 Never did thy voice
 But in affection's deepest music speak ;
 Never was thine heart
 Aught but the kindest sheltering home to mine."

MRS. HEMANS.

WHAT is called the *season* was beginning again ;
 and spring was showing its sickly and premature

verdure in the squares and the gardens of London. On a warm April day—a rare thing and a beautiful—when a few soft showers had washed off the houses and the trees some of the accumulated dust of March, Maurice was slowly walking back from the railway-station, where he had accompanied his step-mother and Mary, who were returning to the country. Mrs. Redmond's health had suffered so much from the winter spent in London, that the change had been considered absolutely necessary for her; and now that Maurice was married, there seemed no reason for their remaining in town. Gertrude had applied herself with unwearied patience to learn the details of their simple housekeeping. She worked indefatigably from morning to night. Never once since the day of her last interview with Father Lifford, had she complained of anything, or omitted any one of the duties of an active and devoted wife. She worked at her needle for several hours in the day; she went into the kitchen,

and with that rare intelligence which characterised her, she mastered all the details of domestic economy, and spent less money, and made her husband as comfortable as the most experienced housewife could have done. She never had spoken harshly, or unkindly to him. Her submission was implicit. She obeyed him as a nun obeys her Superior, or a soldier his Captain. Without him she never went out, except early in the morning to church or on business. With him she went wherever he asked her—into Hyde Park, by the side of the Serpentine, when the full tide of society was swarming along its shore,—still in her mourning, with her majestic beauty—for it was majestic from grace and dignity—however slight her form, and delicate her features. Some have walked on hot ploughshares and not winced as they did so, weak women as they were, when their honour was at stake. Perhaps they did not suffer more than she did during these summer walks by the cool river, under the old

trees that have shaded so much misery and joy. Numberless eyes were turned upon her in curiosity and admiration, never once did they obtain a glance from those dark orbs, which, veiled by their thick lashes, seemed turned inward, as it were, so little notice did they bestow on any outward object. She toiled all day long. She copied out music for him till her head throbbed, and he snatched the pen from her aching fingers; but she never asked him to play.

Once he began the first notes of the Lady-Bird song. She turned pale, and he saw it. He then sang the "Fou de Tolède," and her lips became white. He snatched his hat and rushed out of the room, with a feeling of rage in his heart. What could he do, and what more could she do? She fulfilled her duty to the uttermost; did not even show depression, or give way to lowness of spirits. What had he to complain of?—That she did not love him. Do women devote themselves so patiently and unweariedly to

husbands they do not love? Mary, still the only person to whom he opened his heart, had reproached him almost severely for his misgivings. She had become enthusiastic about Gertrude. She called her an angel,—thought her conduct most touching and admirable. No one pitied him, and yet his heart was breaking. At that time he suffered probably more than she did. Her strong will and independent judgment had adopted a line on which every energy of her soul was bent. She had taken hold of those words of Father Lifford in their last interview, “Devote yourself to your husband as though you loved him,” and acted upon them to the letter, but not in the spirit—for that devotion hardened instead of softening her heart. She joined to that recollection one of her old and inveterate errors,—that the will can influence actions, but not feelings. She found a sort of stern pleasure in making every sacrifice, and even that of her own will, on a thousand occasions, because it was her will to

give up everything but the one proud sense of having paid her debt of duty to the uttermost farthing, in a coin which the debtor could not question, but which was worthless to his aching soul. She did not wrong him even in thought—she never wilfully directed her thoughts to Adrien. Not one of the many little objects associated with the memory of her happier days did she preserve. She never opened his books or dwelt upon the past, but the heart from which she shut him out was henceforward to remain a desert. Maurice had not ventured to read it before he availed himself of her distracted state of mind to hurry her into marrying him, and he had no right to insist on reading it now.

It was a subtle error under which she was acting. She never tried to love or prayed for the power of loving her husband; and who could have supposed this to be the case that had seen her anticipating his slightest wish—bearing his irritability (for he was becoming very irritable) with a

patience which he was sometimes tempted in moments of exasperation to curse, while to all others, and even to herself, it must have seemed the highest virtue. When he was ill she sat up with him all night; she wrote his notes of excuse to his pupils. She went herself to his patrons to apologise for his absence from their concerts. She seemed to have quelled her pride, mastered her temper, and shaken off her indolence. But to have looked at him in a manner that he might have mistaken for love, to have used a single word of endearment that might have implied more tenderness than she felt, *that* she was firmly resolved never to do; and with the characteristic peculiarity of her race, was all the time, as Father Lifford had said, mistaking a vice for a virtue. He was supported in his trials neither by the proud consciousness nor the illusion of virtue. He knew well that he had not had the courage or the justice to test her feelings previous to the decisive hour, by the fulfilment of a solemn duty,

the accomplishment of a sacred trust; the sin had been great, but it had not been deliberate. The atonement was long and severe. Through the stern calmness of her face he was continually striving to discern what its serenity concealed. It was like the veil on the face of the Prophet of Khorassan; he dreaded and he wished to tear away that smooth impenetrable barrier between himself and the object of his continual misgivings, his still passionate affection, and his perpetual scrutiny. He tried every means to pierce through it. He proposed to read out loud to her, and she agreed to it as to everything else he suggested. This was perhaps the hardest trial to her equanimity. He chose whatever was most likely to move her feelings, and by awakening emotion to bring to light the secret sufferings of her soul. He was ingenious in the art of tormenting himself and her. He knew how to select the poem, the tragedy, or the novel that would probe deepest the wound which she concealed with such stoical courage.

He used suddenly to raise his eyes from the book when affecting or startling passages occurred in these experimental readings, and see with mingled sensations of pity and of rage the tear gathering on the eyelid, but forbidden to flow; the deepening flush of the cheek, the momentary abstraction, the upward gaze, or the trembling of the hand when each muscle of the face was compelled to be motionless.

Who that had taken a cursory survey of that little room on such evenings as these would have guessed the misery that was dwelling in those two young hearts? The beautiful wife, in all her stately loveliness, sitting by the round table with her work before her, diligently employed in mending the clothes, or sewing the linen required in the house, never relaxing one instant from her toil, and listening in silence to the accents of love or sorrow, of passion or of regret, by the ablest readers, masters, and spokesmen of the human heart; and he, the

artist, the husband, the lover, the gainer of the treasure which has turned to stone in his grasp, pale with suspense, with eyes that flash fire through gathering tears, and a voice that trembles with emotion, reading what feeds perhaps the flame which burns under that ice without thawing the surface that hardens as he gazes,—how like happiness was the outward aspect of that home, how deep a current of suffering was flowing underneath !

While she every day grew more proudly and harshly virtuous, he became more waywardly and deeply miserable. Fits of ill-humour succeeded one another, bursts of anger immediately repented of, but recurring again at frequent intervals; days of dejection, in which all labour was irksome, and constraint insupportable. His talents were paralyzed in that mental conflict. He lost all energy for study and composition, and gradually most of his pupils discontinued taking lessons. Then he felt an intense wish for any change, and

he pressed her to go into such society as was open to them, and to accept any invitations that were sent her. At first they were few, and from persons of obscure station. She did not seem much to care where she went, and dressed and talked and sat up as long as he chose, and listened to those who spoke to her, as if she were neither more nor less unhappy in one place than in another. She could hardly fail to be agreeable, when she exerted herself at all: her conversation was irresistibly interesting to those who surrounded her, attracted by her singular beauty and the circumstances of her marriage. She never wore anything but a black velvet gown: one day he asked her why she did not put on her diamond necklace, when they were going to some concert where he was to play. She did so immediately: and no hair shirt ever felt so irksome to its wearer; but she bore these little trials, like the great ones, with unflinching fortitude.

At a party one night at the house of a

painter of eminence, who had been many years a friend of Maurice's, she met Mr. Egerton. He did not know her again at first; — but after a moment's hesitation he felt sure he was not mistaken, and claimed acquaintance with her. With the extraordinary self-control she possessed, she did not betray the least agitation, but conversed with him for a long time — not playfully, as of old, but with more cleverness still than in former days — talked about politics, and literature, and a variety of subjects, as if her heart were not aching to a degree which would have made her groan aloud had she, for an instant, given way. He told her Lady Clara Audley was still abroad, and was, he knew, anxious to learn her direction that she might write to her. In her last letter she had said: "Mind you find out something about my Lady-Bird? I will not lose sight of her." A name, a phrase, the tone of voice in which a word is uttered, how sharp is the pang they can inflict! but after a long dull

aching pain there is sometimes a sensation of relief in a change of suffering, and she went on talking of Lady Clara, and asking questions about her.

"How does she like Paris? How does Paris like her?"

"The liking is mutual. She is excessively admired, and she amuses herself from morning to night with every gay and serious thing that comes in her way. She has friends of all sorts and kinds, and they take her to the most different places. She sees people of the most opposite politics, and there are curious meetings in her drawing-room. During the short time that I was with her, she gave me a specimen of the various interests to be found in this new page of her life. It was high time that she should go abroad; she had exhausted novelty in England, and wanted some new canvas to work upon. It would amuse you to hear all the different things that she does in succession. How she goes from a crèche, or an hospice, to the morning rehearsal of

an opera ; from a sermon at St. Roch to a dinner at a café ; how she begins the day with a messe en musique at the Madeleine, and ends with the theatre of the Palais-Royal. Her Paris Sundays are curious : she rushes from one church to another, from the discourses of an Unitarian preacher to the conferences of Father Lacordaire ; from the Swedenborgian meeting, or perhaps from the synagogue, to Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, where she braves the heat and pushes through the crowd, for the sake of the thousand voices that strike up at once their enthusiastic cantiques. I was nearly dead after following her through her successive religious amusements last Sunday."

"She must be very good not to be afraid of thus playing with the most tremendous subjects on earth and beyond it."

"Why, never having hurt a fly in her life, or spoken an unkind word—though she may have uttered many thoughtless ones—I suppose her conscience has no need to give her uneasiness.

Time has as little ruffled her soul as wrinkled her face ;—she is nearly as pretty as ever.”

At that moment Mr. Egerton was struck with the expression of Gertrude's face, on which twenty-two years of life had left traces which nearly forty had failed to impress on his sister's. It was not age, it was not even sorrow that had marked it thus. It was something that he could not understand, something that made him write to Lady Clara the next day : “Your Lady-Bird is, if possible, more beautiful than ever ; but, if I am not much mistaken, the iron has entered into her soul. I never quite understood that expression before, but it came spontaneously into my head as I looked at her last night.”

Whether from curiosity to see the effect which would be produced upon her by the mention of the name of a person whom, at one time, she had been supposed to like, or from thoughtlessness, he went on to tell her that he had seen Adrien at Paris, and related on what occasion. How he

had gone one day with his sister to the subterranean chapel of St. Sulpice, where what is called the Association of the Sainte Famille hold their assemblies. Six or eight hundred workmen, with their wives and children, attend conferences, which create a singular bond of union between them and those who devote themselves to their instruction; the humanising effect of this intercourse, and the strange interest which is attached to a great school for men, makes it one of the most exciting and touching scenes imaginable. Laymen in great numbers, and some of them eminent in various ways, second the clergy, and often address familiar discourses to those rough children of St. Francis Xavier; for it is under that wonder-working name that these men in blouses enrol themselves. Mr. Egerton had briefly described this curious scene to Gertrude, and then said: "We were taken by surprise, when after a few words full of liveliness and fun from Father Milleriot, another person

came up to the table in the centre, and began talking to that singular audience. Guess who it was? Clara gave such a start that it made our neighbours look round."

"I suppose it was Monsieur d'Arberg," Gertrude calmly said. It was the first time she had pronounced his name since she had done so in her father's study a year ago. "Did you see him only that once."

"Only that once," he answered, "Clara had a long visit from him afterwards. He never goes out anywhere, I believe. People cannot understand why he does not become a priest, for he lives a strange life for a man of the world, and seems to have lost all interest in politics and literature, or anything but hard work amongst the poorest people."

"Is he *not* going to be a priest?" she asked, fastening on that idea, but as if afraid to grasp it.

"There does not seem to have ever been any question of it, Clara told me. I never saw any

one so altered. He is handsomer than ever—but looks very ill. You are not going yet, Mrs. Redmond, are you? Malibran is just about to sing.”

She sat down again, simply because she could not stand. Thoughts and feelings were rushing too violently upon her. With all her might she was shutting out of her soul that desolating torrent. People go through a great deal sometimes; and in that moment the singer and the song brought before her the past in bitter contrast with the present. “To the dregs,” she said to herself. “To the dregs,” and sat resolutely draining the sufferings of that hour.

When she went home something seemed altered in the part she had assigned to herself. She was not so calm or so stern as before. Maurice was startled at the expression of her countenance. He felt an imperative desire to question her, to probe her feelings more directly than he had ever yet done. He felt as if for a time he would suffer less, if he had something

definite to complain of. He longed to be able to reproach her or himself. A terrible temptation beset him that night. He had remained alone in the sitting-room after his wife had left it; and he went to his desk and took out of it a sealed letter, which he gazed on for some time in silence, as if he would have pierced with his eyes through the folded paper,—as if the seal was the barrier between him and something which he at once feared and longed to look into.

The letter was not directed to him, “If I were to leave it in her way,” he said to himself, “and could watch her while she read it, I should see by her eyes, by her colour, by her attitude, what interest it excited, what emotion it awakened. But to give it to her without knowing its contents—I cannot do it. O that this detested letter had never reached me! One quarter of an hour later, and my conscience would have been free from the horrid self-reproach that comes between me and peace

every moment of the day. Nothing but this seal to break, and I should learn all. Has not a husband the right to know his wife's secrets? Yet in this way, entrusted to me, and by him too who never knew what it was to suspect or to betray. 'I know you to be an honourable man.' Why did he say that in his accursed note? I ought to have destroyed or returned this letter the day of my marriage. It haunts me as if it was a living thing. I think of it the last thing at night, and the first in the morning, when I walk about the streets; I see it there in its place in my desk, as if it was defying me to read or to destroy it. I *will* destroy it." He started up from his chair and went towards the fire, and held the letter over it, but could not uncloset his fingers to drop it. "Never to know what that man had to say to her; never to ascertain if the phantom that pursues me, and stands between her and me, is a delusion or a reality! What an absurd weakness, not

to break this seal! It was to the honour of one who had no claim upon her that he trusted, —not to mine, who am her husband, and who ought to have her love.”

He put down on the chimney the letter that was causing him such a terrible struggle. It was a strange inconsistency, perhaps, that a man who had not fulfilled a trust by delivering it, when he ought, to her to whom it was directed, should now so hesitate to make himself master of its contents —should tremble at this sin, when he had committed a greater one. His head was buried in his hands, and he was sunk in deep thought. In an instant he felt, more than perceived, that there was some one standing by his side, and he turned as pale as death when he saw that it was Gertrude. Mechanically he put out his hand to snatch up the letter, but she had seen it, and said in her calm stern manner, “That letter is for me—my name is upon it.” His hand trembled; for one second he thought again of destroying it, but felt

giddy and did not do so. She took it from him, and he did not resist: she looked at it again, and recognised the handwriting. A slight trembling came over her, and she turned towards the door.

"No, read it here," he abruptly ejaculated. She had used herself to obey him, and sat down at the table. He remained leaning against the chimney. There was a profound silence in the room. He heard the sound of the breaking of the seal, and the unfolding of the paper. She read it through, and he watched her. He had often watched her before, but never as then. The hectic spot rose on her marble cheek, and deepened into intensity, till it grew into a burning flush: the blue veins on her forehead swelled, and swelled, till they seemed unnaturally distended; her mouth quivered, and she began again to tremble. It was dreadful to see her thus motionless, except for that trembling; it was like the silence of nature before a storm—the rustle of the leaves before the crash of thunder. Then

came the cry of despair, the burst of grief, which nothing could repress. Long held down, it broke forth in that hour. All was forgotten for an instant; and with her hands on her temples, and torrents of tears streaming down her face, she murmured Adrien's name, and groaned in spirit.

The fiery element, which from his Italian mother had passed into the veins of Maurice, inflamed his soul at that instant, and he sprang from the place where he was standing with a fierce impetuosity that would have frightened any but a profoundly miserable woman. It was nothing to her at that moment that he looked as if he could kill her, but it was dreadful to him that he felt it. The reaction was so strong that he staggered and would have fallen, if he had not caught hold of the handle of the door. She saw his deadly paleness, and her heart smote her. "Maurice! poor Maurice!" she said, and held out both her hands to him. He had sat down, and murmured, "Give it me." She obeyed, put it

into his hands ; and now in her turn, sorrowfully, silently, with something between compassion and reproach, she watched him read this letter that had remained so long unread, and which, earlier seen, would have changed the fate of three persons. It had been enclosed in one to Maurice, and had reached him only the very morning of his marriage, when at the point of gaining that end he had so recklessly pursued. Adrien had simply requested him to take an opportunity of giving it to Gertrude, either himself or through Mary, or in any way that would ensure her receiving it. He had added, that he could trust him, knowing he had to deal with an honourable man, and one who knew him (Adrien) well enough to rely on the integrity of his motives in desiring such secrecy.

If Maurice had known that an engagement had previously existed between Adrien and Gertrude, he would not in all probability have kept back that letter, even at that moment of distraction ; but he supposed it contained his first avowal of

affection, and a proposal of marriage, which his misgivings whispered to him might endanger her peace if she married him, or overthrow the whole fabric of his happiness, if it induced her to change her mind. She would then appeal to his generosity; and no alternative would remain to him, but the almost insupportable misery of losing her. To steel his conscience against the voice of duty, to drown the sense of right by specious and rapid reasonings, to say to himself that whatever that letter contained it came too late to give it to her, that it would not even be fair to Adrien, who was ignorant of the strange circumstances under which it would be received, and of the position in which she stood with regard to himself—was the work of a moment. This miserable sophistry was like laudanum taken in raging pain, which stills without drowning the sense of suffering; and the fatal letter was thrust into his breast, and lay next his heart while he pronounced the marriage vow. Great

was his sin, but great also was the penalty that followed it; for this was the letter he had seen her read, and which she now placed in his hands:—

“Dearest Gertrude. We were to have met again—we had reckoned upon it, in that hour of sorrow and of joy, when we parted for a while with hope in our hearts, and a strong trust in each other. You know, or alas! you may not know, that I have been refused by your father. I was denied that short interview for which I pleaded with an earnestness that could have scarcely been withstood, if arguments had not been used which struck me dumb in that moment of suffering and of agitation. I was charged not to disturb your mother’s peace, and thrust myself into your presence while you were watching her dying bed. I prayed to be allowed to write to you, even though my letter should be read by your father, and offered to pledge myself not to write again, if thus far he would condescend to my prayer. He refused even this; he told me that you

were promised in marriage to another person, and that all attempts to correspond with you would be useless, as he would take measures to prevent any letter reaching you, and literally drove me from his house. Gertrude, I knew you would suffer, but I knew also you would trust me—that no false appearances, no calumnies, no assertions of friends or of enemies, if we have any, would make you doubt me, and this alone enabled me to be calm at first.

“I have written to Father Lifford, and implored him to convey to you the assurance, not of anything that could offend your father, but only of what it might concern your peace to know—that one whom you had trusted had not deceived you ; but I feel compelled, by a vague and increasing anxiety, to seek some more direct way of conveying to you an assurance, without which I feel it myself every day more difficult to bear without flinching the burthen of the hour.

“I do not ask anything of you, Gertrude.

You are free : no promise, no duty binds you. But, O remember not to be weak ; whatever is right, that do. God forbid I should ever stand between you and your father ; but it cannot be right to love one man and to marry another : and you *have* loved me, you do love me ; deep in my heart's core I feel it, and never, in the days we were together, never, during the brief sunshine of our love, have I felt for you what I do now. This is all I can—all I will say. I am bound to you by a tie as strong as if you were already my wife ; not the less strong because I hold you to be free, and have no right to reproach you if you obey your father.

“ I am going about the work of life again. The dangerous illness of one of my oldest and dearest friends, at the seminary of Orleans, calls me to his side, and afterwards matters of business, to my brother, in Brittany ; but there, and here, and everywhere, one only effort, and one only prayer shall be mine—to become

worthier of possessing you one day, or to prepare myself to resign you ; and, in so doing, every hope of earthly happiness, if such should be God's will.

“ I shall not write again, my beloved Gertrude, but when I once know that you have received this letter I shall have no fears for you or for myself.

“ Your most affectionate

“ ADRIEN.”

The letter dropped from Maurice's hands, and he hid his face with them. She knelt by the side of his chair ; she felt very sorry for him, more than she had ever done before. “ Forgive me,” she said, gently, “ forgive me, that I married you.” He turned suddenly round, and his eyes flashed fire through their tears. “ Forgive you, while you love that man ! No, by all I have suffered, no ! I do not forgive you. Burn that letter before me, I cannot touch it again.—Burn it this instant.” She stooped to pick it up, and

looked so pale, so unspeakably wretched, as she dropped it into the fire, and watched the flames consuming it, that a sudden reaction occurred in his feelings; he threw himself at her feet, and with startling vehemence exclaimed,

“I received that letter, Gertrude, on the morning of our marriage, and *I* was trusted with it. I might have given it you before you had sealed your misery. O, can you not hate and despise me?”

“*You* had it!” she said. “That letter was in *your* hands! It would have saved me, and you did not give it me! Did you do this, Maurice? O then you deserve the fate you have found. God help us both; we are doomed to a life of sorrow.”

“You never told me you had loved that man; you never told me that you had been engaged to him.”

“You saw my heart was breaking. Did you ever ask me if I loved you?”

“ O, cannot you love me ? At the altar you swore to love me. Have you no pity, no conscience ? ”

“ What do you care for my pity ? What have you to do with my conscience ? I am your wife ; you would have it so. Adrien trusted you. O fool that he was to trust you or me ! ”

The deep flush of resentment overcame, at that instant, the ashy paleness in Maurice's cheek, and he left the room without uttering another word. For the second time in her life it seemed to Gertrude as if the fair edifice of virtue, which she had been so sternly and sedulously raising, had crumbled to the ground. Once again it had been built on the sand ; though it had looked firmer than the first, it had given way under this new blast of agitating grief. She was deeply disturbed in spirit by this scene with her husband. She felt as if she could not now forgive him, or resume that life of practical

devotion to him which had been her support during the last year.

When Maurice returned to his home, a look of settled gloom had fixed itself on his face. There was something reckless and wild in his manner. He no longer asked her to walk with him, or to go into society. He never read, and talked to her but little. She was alone for hours; and now the barrier which she had called virtue, but which was partly made up of pride and resentment, was too feeble to keep back, at all times, the torrent of regrets, of unmastered passion, and intense feelings which were overflowing her soul like a deluging flood. She ceased to deny herself the fatal indulgence of her old habits of dreaming, and no longer banished Adrien's image from her mind. It pursued her everywhere. To confession she dared not go, for she would not renounce the sin of that thought: to mass she still went, but it hardened her heart, for she would not have it softened, but only dared not stay away. She

had a wild, strange feeling of resentment, that not even in prayer could she meet Adrien in spirit; she was without that region where his soul doubtless found peace; and yet she would not break the chain with which passion bound hers. Once more she read his works, secretly as an act of guilt is performed; it was his voice once more in her ears; it was his mind once again speaking to hers; and her cheek burned, and her heart throbbed, but not with the bright enthusiasm of former days—not with the spirit which then had roused her to the knowledge and to the love of virtue. The more fervid was his eloquence, the more noble his sentiments, the more she writhed with the anguish of their irrevocable separation. His earnest words brought back to her memory the voice she was never to hear again; and when he spoke of God, of Heaven, and of goodness, it seemed but the echoes of a music which once had been familiar, but to which her blighted but unsubdued heart no longer responded.

It was a great relief to her now that Maurice stayed so much away from home, that he no longer seemed to require her society; and she did not observe how haggard was the expression of his face at times, or how moody were his long fits of abstraction at others. He was enduring at once the double pangs of jealousy and remorse. There were moments when anger and resentment prevailed; but others again, when he pitied Gertrude, and would have intensely longed to replace her in peace and in freedom, unscathed by the misery he had so recklessly drawn her into. Trials of every kind were staring him in the face; poverty was becoming every day more imminent, and its prospects more galling. His want of power to strive with his own sufferings deprived him gradually of all the resources from whence he had drawn an income. They were soon reduced to live on the small amount of fortune which Father Lifford had bequeathed to Gertrude. It was a

perpetual torment to him thus to owe his support to her, and he made imprudent and desperate efforts to ameliorate the state of his affairs.

Mary had been right. He could not steer alone his bark through a rough sea ; the burthen on his heart and that on his conscience were too much for his strength. Gertrude's coldness, which had now deepened into unkindness, paralysed every nerve, and checked every effort. Before that terrible day when both had read Adrien's letter he had had the stimulus of hope and of fear ; now he neither feared nor hoped, and his mental energies seemed to die away within him. He used to absent himself as much as possible ; and unable to pursue his former occupations, all his anxiety was to spend nothing upon himself that he could possibly avoid, and to devise schemes for improving his worldly position. Their solitary meals were generally silent. She was the least

depressed of the two; but there was a gloomy abyss between them and an image ever present before the mental sight of both. Once or twice during that time old friends sought them out—he got out of the way to avoid them. He shrank from the eyes of others with a morbid sensitiveness. He felt as if Gertrude hated him, and to be hated by one whom he passionately loved, seemed to stamp upon him a brand which made everything odious to him.

And he never had loved her more than now. Sometimes when he came in late in the evening after wandering through the streets for hours he would find her asleep in her chair, worn out with a long day's toil (for work she would with a feverish assiduity); and he would gaze at her with a tenderness which matured for a while both jealousy and resentment; and by degrees the bitter trial he was going through was breaking up the soil where once good seed

had been sown. It was as if scales had fallen from his eyes, as if he had perceived for the first time, almost, the extent of his guilt,—the reckless selfishness of his course,—the miserable amount of his offences in God's sight,—the dreadful injury he had inflicted on the woman he so passionately loved, and the man whom his lower nature hated, while his better self recalled his virtues and the long arrears of gratitude he owed him. Things that Mary used to say to him, now often came to his mind again. He began to look upon the future in a different way from heretofore ; to feel that he might never be, nor deserved ever to be happy again. At moments he struggled against that conviction—he felt to want “ *du bonheur à tout prix.*” He tried to persuade himself that his punishment was greater than his sin ; but once awakened, the conscience of a man who is not wholly perverted is too strong for him, and its logic too powerful. Every succeeding day he reproached

himself more, and others less; and saw in a clearer light his treachery to Mary, his ingratitude to Adrien, and his cruelty to Gertrude. A deep discouragement took possession of him, and his useless passionate efforts to redeem the past, to procure her happiness of some sort, to change something in a fate which appeared to him more and more hopeless, only enhanced the misery of his life.

He vainly tried to compose as he used to do. His genius seemed to have forsaken him. Once only a faint gleam of it returned. He was walking one day in a meadow some way out of London, and as he was strolling listlessly along he saw a troop of children pursuing with eager delight a richly-painted butterfly. Still it eluded their grasp, and flew from flower to flower, its purple and gold wings shining in the sunlight; but one eager hand caught it at last, and the curious children pressed around the fortunate possessor. He opened his hand, and there lay

the crushed insect, with the bright colours rubbed off its light wings, with its life nearly extinct, and its form almost motionless. Maurice turned away, and he murmured as he went, "O my Lady-Bird—my Lady-Bird—thus have I dealt with thee!" When he went home that evening he told her the story; but without any comment. She looked up from her work and said, "Poor butterfly." He wrote a song that night, and called it "The Child and the Butterfly." It was the only good thing he had composed since his marriage. If he had been always able like that day to turn his sufferings into music, he might have marched rapidly towards fame, for he had an ample store to draw from.

There came a day when Gertrude was struck with the perturbed expression of his countenance,—and it would have been strange if she had not, for in addition to the usual care-worn look which his features had lately worn, there

was something quite new in their aspect. He was suffering the keenest anxiety regarding money matters. The mania for speculation was then at its height; and tempted by the ardent desire to improve, not so much his own as Gertrude's destiny, he had embarked in an undertaking which promised fairly, and the risks of which he had not sufficiently considered. The result was unfortunate, and his liabilities surpassed by far his slender means of meeting them. He had only one intimate friend, the young painter, Dee, who in former years had introduced him to Adrien d'Arberg. He was one of the few persons who was often with him and with Gertrude, for whom he had a great admiration; he admired her beauty, but still more her conduct. He saw they were not happy, and wondered why they were not so; but her patience, and her indefatigable industry astonished and charmed him. One day, the same on which Gertrude had been struck by the extreme misery that she saw in his

face, Maurice went to William Dee, and disclosed to him the desperate position in which he found himself. He knew the young painter could not assist him, and in the midst of his distress there was a calmness that perplexed his friend. He offered to persuade others to go security for him, —he endeavoured to find some remedy for the evil, but Maurice stopped him, and said,

“I have no means of retrieving myself; I have been imprudent, and must bear the penalty. My folly has been immense; I have risked more than I shall ever be able to pay. If I had not been deceived my conduct would have been dishonourable. But I had no notion that I was committed to such an extent. There is one thing I am deeply thankful for; Gertrude has a small income settled on herself, which will keep her from absolute destitution. I am liable to be any day arrested, and I care not now how soon it happens. Anything is better than the state of miserable suspense in which I live: I would not have

troubled you about this, dear William, but for one reason,—you will, I know, be kind to her when the blow falls on me. She will want advice, perhaps——”

“And comfort,” the other ejaculated, with glistening eyes.

“None, that you or any one in this wide world can ever give her,” Maurice exclaimed, as if suddenly unable to control his feelings.

He hastily moved to a different part of the room, and struggled with himself for a moment ; then wringing his friend’s hand, he left him.

A few days after this Gertrude was sitting by the fire, at the usual dinner-hour, wondering that Maurice did not come home. The hours went by, and he did not return. All sorts of thoughts came into her mind, of a most contradictory nature ; a nervousness, an anxiety to see him return—not very consistent, perhaps, with her habitual indifference ; and then a vague idea that perhaps he might never return passed through

her mind. The night wore on, and he did not come; she did not go to bed, nor close her eyes; but sat on by the fire, gazing into herself as it were, and pondering over her strange feelings. She longed to hear his footstep on the stairs, but it was more because her anxiety was irksome than because her heart was softened towards him. If he should desert her entirely she would not care, she said to herself, and then she thought of her utter loneliness, and of his melancholy impassioned eyes, and wondered if it would make her sad never to see them again.

The daylight came, and her restlessness increased. Towards nine o'clock William Dee arrived, and when they told her he wished to speak to her, she had a faint sensation at her heart. "Something has happened," that vague sentence which embodies so much vague apprehension! He broke to her, with more caution than was necessary, the fact that Maurice had been arrested; for the instant she heard the

nature of the event which had detained him, she was perfectly calm and very cold. He was provoked at her apparent insensibility, and owned his fears that Maurice was plunged into inextricable difficulties, but that he bore them with resignation, supported by the knowledge that she was not reduced to poverty by his imprudence; that he was anxious to know if she would come and see him in——prison; and then that he hoped that she would send for his mother and Mary, and try to arrange living somewhere with them for a while. He supposed she would not like to go to Stonehouseleigh.

“O no,” she said with a shudder, “*there* I never can go. But what does Maurice mean by these plans? To what extent is he involved—what are his liabilities?”

“It would be useless to explain them to you, Mrs. Redmond. They are greater than he can meet.”

“But not than *I* can meet.”

“ That he would not hear of. His only comfort is, that your small fortune is safe from his creditors.”

“ Not safe from them for one hour longer than I can help. Mr. Dee, if you will not assist me about this, I will instantly apply to some one who will do for money what you might out of friendship.”

“ I must implore you for Maurice’s sake not to think of this,”—(her lip curled)—“ it would make him miserable.”

“ It is not a matter of feeling,” she said sternly. “ More or less misery to either of us signifies but little. His debts must be paid immediately. He *must* be free this very night. I would rather *not* go to see him where he is, but I will if you think he wishes it, even though he should return here to-night.”

“ But, Mrs. Redmond, you will not do this without his consent ? ”

“ I will, and in a way that may ruin me and

not serve him, if you do not help me. Come with me instantly to a lawyer's. I have a *will*, Mr. Dee, that has often asserted itself where it ought to have given way. It will *not* give way now. Be sure of it. Maurice has done nothing dishonourable, has he ?”

“ Not in the least—he has been imprudent, but more sinned against than sinning.”

“ Ay, he has indeed,” she exclaimed; and, weak with the long sleepless night and the agitation she had undergone, she burst into tears, but in an instant conquered her emotion.

She acted all that day with an intelligence and an energy that astonished her companion. In spite of his remonstrances, which grew more feeble as he witnessed her firm resolve, her perfect consciousness of the sacrifices she was making, with at the same time her calm indifference about them, she achieved all the necessary arrangements; and by parting with all but one thousand pounds of Father Lifford's legacy, she

met all Maurice's difficulties, and placed him again in an honourable position in the eyes of the world. His friend went to communicate to him what had been done, and was quite alarmed at his grief and indignation when he heard of it. William Dee was good-hearted and very simple-minded. He did not set much value upon money. It came into his hands and went out of them in a way that did not make him rate as highly as many other people would have done Gertrude's sacrifice of her fortune, and not acquainted with the secret of his friend's heart and destiny, it seemed to him natural enough that his young wife, who had already given up so much for him, should act in this manner. He was not prepared to witness the burst of bitter sorrow mixed with anger against him, with which Maurice received the intelligence, and he kept urging him to go home, as if there he was likely to find consolation and repose.

When Maurice did return, Gertrude received

him with more of her old manner than she had ever shown since their marriage. She smiled a smile he had not seen for many a long day. It went through his heart like a dagger. She made a playful remark upon his absence. His lip quivered :

“ I cannot thank you, Gertrude, for what you have done. It has been no kindness to me.”

“ No, and I did not mean it as such,” she answered. “ I have pleased myself, and I like our present prospects better than I have done anything for a long time.”

“ What do you mean ? ” he said.

“ I mean that of course we must emigrate now. J'ai brûlé mes vaisseaux. The world is a wide one, and a new one will suit you and me, Maurice. Let us go,—let us leave everything behind, and see if the Yankees will not give you work in your profession ; and if not, we will to the backwoods, and lead a savage life. I yearn for the forests and the falls of the New World

What do you say to a logwood cabin ? Shall we not breathe there more freely than here ? ”

His heart beat as she spoke, and he tried to catch her eyes to read their expression, but they were fixed on the fire, which she was stirring while she spoke.

“ Thank God,” he ejaculated, “ that you *have* a wish. I can say no more.”

“ Say nothing, and see to-morrow about a passage,” she answered.

He thought of Mary and her mother, but did not speak of them. The next day, and the next, Gertrude was kinder to him than usual, and she talked with pleasure of the plan of emigrating. But when it was really settled, she could hardly speak of it in the same tone. The past rose again before her. This was indeed cutting the cable, and going adrift. Never to hear again of Adrien,—never, even by chance in the course of long years, once to see his face ; for she had thought of that chance, till it had grown into an

expectation, and her heart sank within her at the very thought of new scenes which she had for an instant imagined would relieve the restless pain of an incessant looking back without peace, and forward without hope. Her fits of abstraction were longer and deeper than ever, till the work of preparation began. Then she worked as if a slave-driver had been near her. He sold the copyright of his opera for a trifling sum, and bought a travelling case for her. He put it in her way, but did not give it her as a present. He wanted no thanks—not even a smile.

He went into the country to take leave of Mary and Mrs. Redmond. Once more he sat in the little garden under the thorn-tree, and looked on the familiar scenes amidst which his childhood had passed, and he had a great deal of conversation with Mary. He confided to her the story of his sin, his sorrow, and his remorse. They strolled together to the bridge over the Leigh, and sat under the shade of the dark

alders; they visited the graves of Mrs. Lifford and of the old priest they had loved, and the church where Maurice used to play the organ. He spent an hour with Mr. Erving at Stonehouse-leigh, and Mary waited for him, kneeling before the altar, with her face buried in her hands, and walked with him afterwards to the station. Up and down the platform they paced for a few minutes, and then the train came in sight, and they stood still. "Now, good-bye, Mary; I will never forget what you have done for me to-day. The way may yet be long and difficult, but the crushing weight is removed." She could not speak but wrung his hand, and he bent down to kiss her. The train was soon out of sight. She stood where he had left her till it disappeared, and then walked home; and her mother thought her very pale, but there was a deep thankfulness in her heart, a gratitude in the midst of her grief, which gave a heavenly expression to her face.

Maurice had gathered a nosegay of flowers in the cottage garden. When he arrived in London he laid them in a corner of the room without speaking. Gertrude saw them when she came in, and began to arrange and tie them up. Everything in their room was packed up. There was nothing else to do that evening. She seemed to like those flowers,—she gazed on each of them and smelt at them repeatedly, but they did not trust themselves to speak of the visit he had made. It was their last evening in England. William Dee called upon them, and they all tried to talk cheerfully. The next day they embarked.

CHAPTER V.

—•—
"Déjà ma barque fugitive
S'éloigne à regret de la rive.
J'affronte de nouveaux orages ;
Sans doute à de nouveaux naufrages
Mon frère esquif est dévoué ;
Et pourtant à la fleur de l'âge
Sur quels écueils, sur quel rivage,
Déjà n'ai-je pas échoué ?"

LAMARTINE.

" Oh vista inaspettata ! oh vista
Cara non men che dolorosa !

ALFIERI.

ONE of those vast receptacles of human beings, one of those floating worlds, those temporary homes, which carry away from our old worn out time-honoured country—our old England—which we all love with a love that some of us can hardly understand, but which asserts itself in ways at times, and in hearts where it would be least

expected, compelling them to exclaim "England, dear England!" something in the same spirit which made James II. cry out, when from the coast he saw his French allies dispersed by the British fleet, "Ah, my brave English!"—the patriot's not the politician's cry. One of those great refuge-houses of the poor and of the homeless,—one of those ocean caravans that bear away so many youthful energies, and so much life, and spirit, and hope, and sorrow from our shores to those of the New World, was lying at anchor at Blackwall. The part of the vessel allotted to the steerage passengers had been gradually filling with persons, who seemed almost more numerous than the huge ship could contain: but still they came, and found their places, and looked about them with excitement or with listlessness, with pleasure or with pain, with hope or with fear, according to their ages, their characters, or their prospects. Some were leaving their hearts' treasures behind them; some

were going to find them again on the other side of the Atlantic ; some few, perhaps, had laid up theirs in Heaven, and ceased to care for anything but the interests of the Kingdom which is not of this world ; to others again the past was a dream, and the future a blank. Some came well provided with comforts for the passage ; others had nothing but the scanty outfit of an emigrant. Some wept because one they loved had hung about their neck and had given them a last kiss that day ; others wept because no hand had pressed theirs, and no kind voice had said "farewell," or "God bless you."

What an epitome of life, with its various griefs, its gradations of outward prosperity, its inward and unsuspected trials ! One poor Irish woman was crying because six little children were crowding around her.

"And what will I do with them, the cratur's ?" she ejaculated, as they began to shiver and complain.

"And what will I do without my baby?" murmured another younger woman, who had buried her only child the day before. "Nobody shall comfort me now, and it's myself will die of grief." But one there was who did comfort her, and she died not of grief; for He put it into her heart to nurse the baby of the woman who had too many little ones to care for, and she learnt during that voyage that it was "more blessed to give than to receive."

It was a strange subject for study and for thought—that crowded deck. The thrifty, neat, and well-dressed group,—the squalid, dirty, poverty-stricken families,—side by side; the vicious degraded countenances of some poor wretches, who were escaping perhaps from detection and punishment; the daring impudence of one, the stolid stupidity of another; the mischievous quickness of a third; the contrast between the few English and the numerous Irish passengers,—none amongst the first so degraded

in men's eyes; but not any of them perhaps so near to Heaven as some of the last,—famine-stricken creatures who had patiently borne an incredible amount of suffering, and had passed spotless through the ordeal of London, that fearful abyss in which so much purity and virtue sink to rise no more. It is a strange and a moving sight, that great assemblage of human creatures, about to seek a new existence in that strange country, which has all the hope, the freshness, and the faults of childhood; which opens its wide arms to the wanderers of the earth, its boundless soil to every hand that will plough it—its deep vitality to every mind that will stir it.

The cabin passengers had also arrived. They were seeking their berths, and stowing away their luggage. In one very small cabin, Gertrude was sitting, feeling at that moment more bewildered than unhappy. She had been for some hours on board, and hardly having slept for the last two or three nights, had dozed a little that

morning, in spite of the strangeness of the scene. Maurice came to ask her if she wished for anything. "Yes," she said, "to go awhile on deck, and fix in my memory the last impression of the country we are leaving." How she had once longed to leave it, she thought to herself, as she mounted the narrow stairs up to the deck. How, as a girl, she had often repeated to herself the lines that begin—

"O'er the glad waters of the deep blue sea ;"

and longed to fly away, not to be at rest, but in the very midst of the strife and excitement of life.

It is so singular to go calmly and coldly through times and scenes which would once have made our hearts bound, and our eyes sparkle with delight. She stood on deck, and gazed more curiously than sadly on the shore, on the forest of masts, on the boats going to and fro, on the mass of human beings on the other end of the deck, and on the numerous passengers on theirs. Maurice stood

by her side, and was surprised and glad that she did not seem more deeply moved as the moment of departure approached. He felt it very much—far more than she did, in one sense; but he seemed hardly to care for anything now, but the varying expression of her face. She said in a low voice, “There lies that great city which we shall never perhaps see again, that country which we are probably leaving for ever. I suppose that to some people, death is very like such a departure as this.” Whether they went down to the bottom or landed in America, the change could hardly be greater.

“Are you afraid of the sea, Gertrude?”

“Afraid? O no. I am afraid of nothing.”. He sighed.

“It is very cold,” she said, and drew her shawl round her.

“Will you go down again? It will be long yet before we move.”

“No. I would rather stay here. It amuses

me to watch the boats going to and fro, to look at this busy scene, and fancy it some great human ants' nest; and wonder what the angels think of us when we trouble our heads about the grain of sand that falls upon our heads, and deem it a mountain, and strive and struggle to free ourselves. How strange it is to see that immense concourse of human beings, and feel that amongst them there is probably not one that we have ever seen before, or ever will see again. I cannot go down to the cabin, but it is very cold. Will you fetch me my cloak?"

Maurice went to look for it, and she remained gazing on the water with a kind of vague and vacant interest. A boat had put off from the shore, and was nearing the steamer. It was full of ladies, and one or two men also, besides the rowers. Gertrude was short-sighted, and did not discern their faces. They came alongside the ship, on the other side from that where she

was sitting. In a few minutes she heard a person who was standing near her say to another, "There is a party of smart folks arrived to see the ship before she starts, and stare at the emigrants. They are walking about with the captain. I suppose we shan't be off for another hour, at soonest." A moment afterwards, Maurice came with the cloak, and said to her hurriedly,

"Had you not better come downstairs again, Gertrude?"

"Why?" she said. "Let me look upon land as long as I may. I shall have enough of the close cabin soon."

"There are people on board whom you used to know."

"Who—who do you mean?"

"The Audleys, and some others."

"Lady Clara! O is she here?" Gertrude ejaculated, and pressed her hand on her forehead. One moment she remained silent, and

seemed to be communing with herself, and to be agitated by conflicting impulses.

"I will go down to the cabin," she said hurriedly, "and there, if possible, I should wish to see Lady Clara for one instant. Will you have this note conveyed to her?"

She hastily wrote a few lines in pencil, and drawing down her veil, hastened across the deck, and down through the labyrinth below to the hiding-place she sought. "Dying people," she said to herself, as she sat down on the edge of the narrow couch—"dying people may often do what would be wrong in others; and is not an eternal absence a kind of death? If I can speak to her, perhaps this throbbing heart will beat more calmly, through its remaining years. O how strange, that out of that great city I was gazing upon, should have come at this time one of the very few I have known, who has ever shed a brightness over my path, and never looked upon me but with kindness! Perhaps

she will not come; she may be afraid of a scene. O, if she knew how calm misery can be when it reaches its height!" She waited some time, and then the cabin-door opened. "How do you do, Lady Clara?" she said with that coldness which suppressed emotion gives. "How are you? Well, I hope? I am so sorry to have given you this trouble."

Lady Clara had an anxious perturbed look. She pressed Gertrude to her heart, and struggled not to shed tears. They sat down side by side, each scarcely venturing to look at the other; but Gertrude was infinitely the more composed of the two, and able to keep down her agitation, and to speak in her usual tone of voice, while the other could hardly command herself.

"How little I could have thought to see you again here," she falteringly said; "I dare not ask you all I wish to know. What are your plans—your intentions? If it is as well with you, as with all my heart I wish it to be, I hope,

dearest Gertrude, that you are only leaving England for a short time."

"I am leaving it for ever, and therefore I have wished to see you, to thank you for the kind interest you have always shown me."

"Does your father know? has he suffered that you——" "There is a deeper gulf between us than the ocean. I do not complain of him. O no! It is better that I should go far from him—from you—from every one. I wished to go. It is my own will, my own doing. But I have asked to see you, not only once more to look upon a face that I loved in other days——" She fixed her eyes steadily on Lady Clara, and saw that she was striving to master her emotion, and went on in the same calm manner—"but also that I must ask you to do for me what you only can. If I were not going away for ever, I could not do this; but as I shall never see M. d'Arberg again——" A strange expression passed over Lady Clara's face, but

Gertrude did not see it, and went on, "As I never shall see him again, I think I may ask you to tell him or to write to him, that I never heard from him before my marriage; that I have been reckless, rash, and much to blame, but not false; that I was deceived into believing he had forsaken me, and, till a short while ago, never knew that he had not. I wish him to know this, and I hope he will remember me in his prayers. Will you tell him so, Lady Clara? Kind friend of my happy days, you only know what I had gained, and what I have lost. Will you do what I have asked you?"

Lady Clara was looking painfully embarrassed, her colour went and came. "When I can do this, dearest Gertrude, I do not exactly know, for M. d'Arberg is going — I suppose I had better tell you — It is so strange, so extraordinary! Did you indeed never expect to see him again?" Gertrude's eyes were fixed on hers but she did not speak. "He too is

going to America — I — I have just seen him.” She turned very pale and murmured “*Where?*” “I had better prepare you for it; I don’t know how much or how little you will mind meeting him again, but at all events you ought to know that at any moment — In short, the fact is, he is on board this very vessel — ”

Gertrude stood up and put her hand on Lady Clara’s arm. “Then,” she said, “take me with you. Take me to see him once more — and then all will be over. He will go away with you, but once before my death I shall have seen his face again. I have longed for it till I almost expected it, up to the last few weeks. That moment is now come. Take me where I can see him, Lady Clara. If I wait much longer I shall not have strength to go through it calmly. Now I can. Do not be afraid. Let us go.”

Lady Clara was much agitated: she did not know how to act — she had never been in any

difficulty — had never encountered a trying scene before: she was nervous and afraid to speak or to explain. But she felt it was necessary, and taking both Gertrude's hands in hers, she said, "Dear unhappy child, you will have, I fear, but too many opportunities of seeing him. It is a sad position for you and for him; at least I fear from your looks, from your words, that it will be a trial to you, as it must be a great one to him, but he is going in this very steamer,—going with a party of emigrants. It was to see him off that we came here ——"

Gertrude leant an instant against the door of the cabin, and hid her face in her hands. When she raised it again, it would have been difficult for any one to read its expression. There was a tumultuous sensation in her brain and in her heart. She could not speak. At that moment some one knocked, and she heard Mr. Audley's voice calling Lady Clara. "We must go, my love. They want us away—the

boat is ready." One long kiss Lady Clara gave Gertrude, and burst into tears. "Come, make haste," her husband said, as she came out. She looked at him through her tears, and said, "Say good-bye to her." He looked into the room, but Gertrude had turned away, and he followed his wife upstairs.

It had been a false alarm that the vessel had been about to start. There was yet a further delay. "I have seen her husband," he whispered, as they stood again on the deck. "We met face to face, and shook hands. Does d'Arberg know they are on board?"

"No, I am sure he does not; where is he?"

"Looking after some of his people, I believe—stowing them away under proper protection, and comforting those who take on, as they call it, at bidding farewell to this old land of workhouses and parochial relief. Well, well, this 'Amor patriæ' is a funny sort of thing, and lurks in strange corners of the human heart. Let us

look for him amongst the steerage passengers. Do you mean to tell him that that Lady-Bird of yours is here?"

"I don't know what to do. It will be kinder, I think. In such cases nothing is so bad as meeting unprepared."

They joined some of the other people who had come on board to see the emigrants off, and looked for Adrien in every direction. They could not find him, till just when the last bell rang and they were hurrying into their boat, he joined them for an instant; but there was only time for her to shake hands with him, and she looked upon that ship with a strange interest, as they rowed away from it. She thought of all that it contained, wondered over the extraordinary coincidence that had brought together two persons who had been everything to each other once, who had been so abruptly, so irrevocably parted as it had seemed until this day, and now he was near her, and he

did not know it, and she was near him, and she knew it. How soon would chance bring them together? What would their meeting be? What would their parting be? What a strange episode of life to both that Atlantic passage might prove. Would it be the end of the romance of their existence, or the beginning of sin and of sorrow? Lady Clara was thoughtful; she felt glad that her path had never led through briars and precipices,—that it had been so smooth and so straight. Perhaps she did not thank God enough, for it is a great blessing not to have been exposed to temptation: it is a greater one, however, to have passed through the furnace unscathed.

The voyage has begun. The vessel is gliding along the yet smooth waters, but the wind is whistling, and the rain is beginning to fall. Gertrude is lying on her narrow couch, and with closed eyes listening to the beating of her own heart; he is near her—he whom she has

loved as few women love; he is near her, here, where for awhile nothing can part them. They may avoid each other, but far apart they cannot be. The same ship holds them,—the same waves carry them,—the same wind drives them on, and they breathe the same air. She opened the little window of her cabin, and gazed upon the water so near to her head. It gave her a dizzy vague feeling of trust and of fear. She was carried on she knew not whither. She was safe and yet very near destruction. There was a plank between her and the deep sea. What was there between her and sin; not even in that hour a good resolution. She was very tired of suffering—that was all she knew. O how busy the tempter was in that hour with that weary spirit, how he whispered in that watching ear, how he hung over that silent form. No thought of guilt did he send to pass before those closed eyes. He only said, “Rest a little. Do not fight so incessantly with what no human

strength can conquer,—the might of a love, which is a part of yourself. Look once more upon that face, which you had thought never to see again. It will calm, not disturb you,—it will strengthen, not weaken you. Was it not from him you once learned what since you have forgotten? Go and learn again from him to be good, to be strong.”

Thus spoke the tempter, and she listened, but he was only sowing seed; she did not act upon those thoughts,—not one step would she have stirred to advance the moment on which her soul was set, but at the approach of which, at the very idea of which, she trembled like a leaf. Maurice came and sat by her some time. He thought she was asleep. A bell rang, and he—as he fancied—awoke her, and asked if she would come to dinner; she refused, and begged him to go without her. She could not bear that together they should see Adrien for the first time. She felt they would now meet, and the

hour that he was absent appeared to her a whole day. When he returned she looked at him, and drew a deep quick sigh, but there was no agitation or difference in his manner. He began talking of insignificant things, and giving her some account of their fellow-passengers. Was he dissembling, was it possible he did not feel all it was to her to see Adrien again? Had he forgotten the letter, the scene? It was impossible he could have seen him, or he would not be so unmoved. Was it a mistake or a dream?—Was Adrien *not* on board? Then, by the cold, heavy feeling at her heart, she almost thought she must have been happy during the last few hours.

Towards evening her head was aching intensely, and she longed to breathe the fresh air. She went to the deck, and sat some time watching the waves and the sunset clouds, or gazing on the persons who were passing and repassing before her. He was not amongst them. She began to think that she had dreamt that

Lady Clara had ever told her he was on board. She went into the principal cabin, and still he was not there; she became almost convinced that her ears, her fancy, her senses had deceived her. Thus did the next day also pass, and the next also—till towards night she overheard two persons, who were sitting near her, talking of something that arrested her attention.

“Did you say he was a Frenchman?” one said to the other.

“So I was told; it’s queer, isn’t it? Lives with them entirely; eats, and sleeps, and sits where they do;—talks to them at nights too, and in English, which is curious. Those Irish crowd about him, as if he were St. Patrick himself. I went on the deck on purpose to hear him last evening. It is amusing enough; he tells them stories, and they groan, and laugh, and ejaculate, and cross themselves all in one time. They’re a strange set, those Irish.”


“But what does this French count do it for?”

“ He is half English, they say, and has property in Ireland, and some of that set are his own people, and he has come out with them to set them going on the other side, and he lives with them to learn how they are treated, and give the government an account of their hardships, which are many, I fear, poor souls. It’s a Quixotic sort of thing. Might have learned it all, I dare say, without so much to do about it.”

“ The wind’s getting up; we shall have a rough night of it, I expect.”

“ It’s cold sitting here. Let’s walk.”

That night Gertrude laid her head on the pillow, and the noise of the wind and the waves seemed again, as on the first day, to speak of one who was lying not far off on a hard and narrow couch, whose thoughtful eyes were raised to Heaven in prayer, as the ship bounded along, and who little weened that she whose image still haunted him, amidst his days’ long labours and his nights’ short rest, was also watching and



listening to the same melodies, and gazing at the same stormy sky.

"Mrs. Redmond, an't you bored to death?" said to Gertrude a pretty little woman whom she had sat by at meals, and who had been civil and kind to her during the last three days.

"No," she answered quickly, "*that* is one of the sufferings I have ceased to experience. I am never bored. I envy those who are," she added in a low voice.

"Well, I think you are a very happy person. When I am at home and have plenty of things to attend to, it does very well, but I am too sick to read or work, and my husband likes to be on deck all day, and I don't know really what to do with myself. If it is not very rough this evening, would you mind coming with me to look at the steerage people, and listen to what that strange gentleman that's always with them reads and says to them? Somebody told me it was very curious.

"I should like it," Gertrude answered in a low voice, "if we do not go too near them."

"O you don't fancy going amongst those low people, neither do I; but we need not be close to them, you know."

That was little in Gertrude's thoughts. Would she have shrunk from the poorest and the roughest of those creatures amongst whom Adrien sat?—of whom he took such careful heed? Did she not envy the child who sat at his feet,—the poor orphan girl who told him her tale of sorrow, and heard words of comfort from his lips,—the old man whom he supported up the narrow stairs, and placed by his side when they all gathered together after their evening meal, to forget awhile the common hardships of their lot? And the sufferings of the steerage were, for passengers in an emigrant vessel, greater then than they are now. The ordinary comforts of life were scarce; age and infancy had much to endure; and even those who had been used to the wild roughness of their

Irish homes, or the wretched dens of their London abodes, had trouble to bear up against the varied annoyances of this passage in their poor lives, this, in a twofold sense, their passage to the New World.

The two women whom chance had thrown together that day sat down in a corner of the ship, sheltered by some bales of goods, with their cloaks on, and their veils down. They came there, the one to seek amusement, the other—— What! O what are you come to do there, Gertrude? What business have you to look on that face again? What right have you to listen to that voice which thrills to your very heart?—Yes, hide yourself from his sight; pull the veil closer round your head. The wind is blowing about you, but there is something wilder than the wind in your heart, and in your brain. He speaks and you tremble. Are you sure it is he? For one instant look up—there he is opposite to you—not very far from you; he is looking pale and very thin, but the light in his eyes is not dimmed.

The soul shines out of them as brightly as ever, and the smile that illumines that face was never more beautiful than now. All those expressive countenances are turned to him; they crowd about him, his poor emigrants; most of them he personally knows, and if they were his children, his manner—when he speaks to them—could not be more gentle. What if in that instant his eye should fix itself upon you, Gertrude,—would it be gentle or stern? You know not, but one thing you feel: once before you leave that ship you must speak to him, you must carry away with you the remembrance of one kind word from his lips.

Now the groups of listeners are hushed into silence, for he is reading to them. It was the account of the shipwreck of St. Paul. When he came to the verse "For an angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, stood by me this night," there was one in that audience who forgot that he was not speaking of himself. She felt as if God's angel were indeed standing by him: she

felt as if God's claim upon him had been too strong for an earthly love to dispute it, and she hung on each word that fell from his lips as if it contained a message from Heaven. Then he spoke to those Irish hearts, as one who knew them well—their strength and their weakness,—their childlike faith, mighty in life and in death, and fervent as their passions. He set before them vivid pictures of vice and of virtue, of Heaven and of hell, clothed in familiar words and illustrated by fanciful similes. It was strange to observe how his genius and his eloquence, which had often commanded the applause of listening assemblies, knew how to assume a form that captivated the attention of that restless group. How their eyes glared and flashed when he bade them fight with the devil, and snatch from him his victims ; how they laughed a wild laugh of delight when he told them how to cheat him of the souls he had made sure of, by turning their back upon him when he least expected it, and

beginning, even the very worst among them, to serve God that night. He drew pictures of good and bad Irishmen ; all good servants, however,—all zealous of their work, and intelligent at their business—sure of high wages at last and a high place somewhere ; they would do nothing by halves. When they served Almighty God it was with all their hearts ; when they bound themselves to Satan they were clever at his work and very like him in his ways, for they never ceased believing while they blasphemed, and trembling while they cursed.

Once in the midst of his discourse, he pointed to the sky, to a bright star that shone amidst the clouds, and asked them who it was like, and simultaneously there rose from the whole group the “Ave Maris Stella,” that hymn which has cheered so many mariners through the surges of life, as well as on the billows of the ocean. When the singing died away he told them tales of other times, or gave them descriptions of the land they were going to, or set before them some high

example of patient suffering, or heroic exertion. Before parting they all knelt together and said the night prayers, which most of them had been used to. In the course of them there is a short and impressive pause for the examination of conscience. When many are joined together in this, there is something solemn and touching in the sudden hush of many voices—the profound silence of those few moments during which each separate heart is questioning itself and laying before God its various and widely different amount of guilt and of temptation. It was so in this case, and deep to her heart's core did Gertrude feel it. It seemed as if Adrien must be reading there the sin that she had ceased to struggle with; perhaps she then felt also that we are sure of God's mercy, but never of man's, for she shuddered at the thought of Adrien's knowing how she, the wife of another, gave way to a guilty though secret affection, even though he himself were its object.

When the prayers were ended, and her companion who was somewhat weary rose to go, she followed her, and found Maurice waiting for her in their cabin. He was sitting at the small table against the wall with his head leaning on his hands. She put hers on his shoulder, and asked him if he were asleep.

"Where have you been?" he said, without turning towards her.

"On deck," she answered, while a sudden flush suffused her cheek. He looked at her attentively, as if to scan the expression of her face. She turned away, and he murmured,

"Well, everything must come to an end, I suppose."

"Are you already weary of the voyage?" she said.

"I am weary of my life."

He went away, and came back again. He moved impatiently about the narrow little slip of a room, and then stopping opposite to her, said

with bitterness, "It is a pity that we are not steerage passengers. It would have made you happier, I suppose." The colour left her cheek, and she bit her pale lips almost through. "I do not mean to be unkind to you, Gertrude, but you know, oh you must know that a man's heart can be tried almost beyond endurance." Neither of them mentioned the name of Adrien; and the next few days passed like the preceding ones.

M. d'Arberg never left the part of the vessel where he had cast his lot; the cabin passengers often spoke of him. Some thought he must be a little deranged; some admired his conduct, and wondered at his self-devotion; many went of an evening to listen when he read or conversed with his people. Gertrude always sought that same place where she had sat the first night. There, with her face concealed by her veil, she remained in all weathers. Her little companion grew tired of sitting with her. It amused her well enough at

first, but she became weary of Gertrude's abstraction, who was too much absorbed in the scene to converse with her. She did not seem to hear when she whispered remarks about the queer faces that appeared amongst the listeners. Mrs. Darton, for that was her name, came to the conclusion that Mrs. Redmond was after all very stupid, and she left off going to the same seat, and nobody else found their way to it. That one figure in black was always there. Adrien's eye now and then rested upon it. There was something in its attitude which he fancied was familiar to him, though he did not discern what it was that it recalled to his mind.

One evening, when he came as usual to his post, he looked worn and fatigued. Disease was beginning to spread on the lower deck. The sleeping rooms were dreadfully close—the food was bad—the weather had been heavy and disagreeable during the last few days—the winds contrary. The passage promised to be long and tedious ;

murmurs and complaints had been loud in the passengers' cabin that day on the subject. Maurice had said nothing; but his heart had sunk within him as he heard it. He loathed that ship with inexpressible disgust. He looked sometimes at the waves with an expression that would have pierced through Mary's soul, had she seen it. But what did Gertrude feel? She felt like a criminal reprieved—like one respited on the very verge of the grave. On the evening we are speaking of, Adrien had seen much sorrow and suffering amongst the emigrants, especially amongst those who were not his own people. For them he had managed before starting to ensure a certain degree of comfort. But he was no longer the rich man that he used to be. He had taken some time ago the gospel advice, the evangelical counsel, and had sold all or almost all, had given to the poor, and was now following his Lord's footsteps, but with a thorn in his heart which he endured without wincing,

but which was sharper than toil, or abstinence, or bodily pain.

He felt on this day that it was difficult to meet the usual exertion of that hour. He was anxious about a poor child below who had sickened with the fever. He was not contented with the care that the surgeon on board bestowed upon it—he had seen the mother's wistful countenance, and it haunted him. But he roused himself, and perhaps more than ever reached the hearts of his audience, when after reading to them a while, he began talking to them out of the depths of his own. He compared the voyage they were making to the great voyage of life, and the illustration came home to them with strange power. He spoke of sorrow, of trials, of those which God sends to us as if straight from his own will, of those in which men and their misdeeds are the agents; of palpable and of nameless suffering, of disappointment and of hopelessness; of remorse

and of confession, of sin and of contrition ; of faith and its triumphs, of light in darkness, and hope against hope. Once he alluded to himself ; he said it was not a theory with him, that deep sense of the value of suffering which he wished to impart to them. No, those who had never gone through a severe affliction knew, as a point of faith, that it was precious as expiation, and weighed in the balance of eternal justice ; but they could not know what it did for the soul, till they had themselves become familiar with it, and received it as a bosom friend. When every earthly hope of happiness is departed, when a man stands alone with his God and his suffering, then he could tell them by experience (and his voice trembled) how that God reveals himself, how that grief, like the burning couch on which martyrs have smiled, becomes dear and sacred to his soul, and wins for him peace at first and joy at last.

“ I know,” he continued, “ that some of you

have sad thoughts to struggle with ; I know some of your sorrows ; I know some of your fears : would that I could tell you how one short year ago I felt as if my cross were heavier than I could bear, how the sudden blasting of the dearest hopes I had cherished——” He paused, and turned as white as a sheet. What had he seen just then ? That face—those eyes with their deep, shadowy, heart-rending expression. Those eyes that had met his and darted into his very soul, not the memory, but the actual living presence of an unforgotten reality. O was it a vision,—an instant’s delusion ? Again that motionless form, that bent down head, that shadowy figure was shrouded as before, as night after night he had seen it. Was it a dream that had mocked him for an instant,—a phantom that had been raised, and had looked at him with the eyes he was ever trying to forget ? He spoke again of peace, but it was with a more tremulous voice. His own had a sure foundation, but its surface had been

disturbed. The rock was unshaken, but the waves had washed over it.

And she who had listened, and had looked upon him that night—what strange impulse had made her raise her veil at that moment? What fear had made her cover her face with her hands when his eyes had met hers? There she remained long after he had ceased to speak. She had not stirred or looked round. Once a heavy sigh had been breathed close to her ear. But her soul was absorbed, and she thought not of it again. Adrien's words had reached many hearts that night, but had sunk deeper into one than into all the rest.

"I always thought there was a likeness between him and Mary," Maurice said to himself, and almost felt as if she had been speaking to him through the lips of the man whom he had once so much loved, and for a while so much hated. "Well, we are all miserable enough," he ejaculated, as he left the deck and slowly sought

his cabin; and at that moment the words of the Bible came into his head, "And we indeed justly, but this man has done no evil." And from that hour his feelings changed, and he ceased to hate Adrien.

CHAPTER VI.

"Most dangerous is that temptation which does goad us on
To sin in loving virtue."

SHAKESPEARE.

"'Tis one thing to be tempted,
Another thing to fall."

Ibid.

THE following day several of the emigrants were ill with the fever, and Adrien then found that the task he had undertaken was no light one. There was more suffering and inconvenience in the mere fact of living amongst them than most men would have encountered; but when illness was added to privation and discontent, the hardships became almost intolerable, but then, in proportion, increased the opportunities of usefulness, both to the bodies and the souls

of these sufferers. As far as his power went, he ministered to them assiduously. He had passed a restless night; for having ascertained the previous evening from the list of passengers that Maurice and Gertrude were indeed amongst them, he remained awake, reflecting on that strange meeting that chance had effected; or if he slumbered awhile, he was haunted by those eyes which for a moment had been fixed upon him, disturbed by dreams in which that face was ever present, and would start up under the impression that she was near him—she whom he had never expected to see again.

Sleep fled from his eyelids; he mused on her fate,—he wondered whether she had preferred Maurice to him, or if not, what had induced her to marry him? Against his will his thoughts recurred to the period of their love and their parting. Emotions which he had mastered, regrets he had, as it were, trodden down, seemed to rise again; and it was only in hard work the next day,

in practical devotion to the objects of his interest, that he recovered that inward, as well as outward self-possession which he had long struggled for, and lately had attained. When the evening hour of converse with his people approached, he had some trouble to preserve that composure; and while preparing his subjects of reading and discourse, he felt as if each word that night had a double meaning, and might convey to Gertrude a reproach, an appeal, or a regret. He intended to seek her and Maurice that evening. *He* had not injured them, though they had injured him; and both might be happier for his forgiveness. It was not in his nature to stand coldly aloof. He could understand their shrinking from his presence, but why should he turn away from them? Perhaps it was poverty that was driving them from England. There was a world of misery in that one glance, that one rapid vision of her face he had had the previous night. He longed to see it once more;

and drive away the memory of that look that had given a mute but too expressive answer to the allusion he had made to his own subdued sufferings,—his own mastered grief. He talked to his people of the patient endurance of bodily pain ; he could not trust himself to speak of the trials of the soul. He told them stories of the first discovery of America, the land they were bound to. Some might have thought that the tone of his mind was more cheerful than the day before. Much that he said was in rather a gay strain, and there was more laughing amongst his hearers than usual. He steered clear of any of those topics that move men deeply.

After the assemblage broke up, he stood irresolute for an instant. One by one they disappeared, and he was left alone, or nearly so. But he felt he must speak to her ; she had hastily risen from her usual seat, and was going away in another direction. He overtook her, and said in a low voice, " Will you not shake hands with me ? "

She stopped; the moment so longed for, so dreaded, was come, and she had to meet it as best she might. With eyes averted, she placed her trembling hand in his, and then stood still, as if unable to move or to speak.

“Will you not sit down one instant,” he said, “and tell me something about yourself, and about Maurice? Believe me, I care for your happiness as much as ever. I have prayed for it every day of my life.”

“Then you have prayed in vain,” she passionately exclaimed. “Cease to weary Heaven with such prayers,—they are a mockery.”

He was silent. This answer struck a chill into his heart, and a sort of cloud passed before his eyes. “It had been better that we had never met again,” she said, in a low voice, as if speaking more to herself than to him; “better for you, at least, if indeed you had supposed I was happy, for I believe you wish me so, and I cannot deceive you. It would have been right, I know, to shake hands

with you kindly, and then talk of our respective plans and projects, and speak, and look, and seem as if we had never spoken, or looked, or felt differently. This would have been right, perhaps, but there are things that some people *can* do, and that others cannot."

There was something reproachful in her manner of saying this; and greatly moved, he exclaimed, "God help me! Gertrude, do you imagine *I* have not suffered?"

She looked at him, and in his pale, calm face she saw an expression of such deep and painful anxiety, as he gazed into hers, that she knew at once that he felt for her even more than she felt for herself.

"It is of no use," she hurriedly continued. "Why should we talk together? Why have we met again? I have nothing to reproach you with, and you will not, I know, reproach me; though you might, and perhaps you ought."

"You have said too much already thus to leave

me, Gertrude. It will be better for both of us now to clear up the mystery of the past, and understand how it came to pass that we, who parted as we did, should meet again as we do now. Did you receive a letter from me before you married?"

"No," she answered, with her eyes fixed on the ground. "But I have seen it *since*."

"It arrived, then, too late!" he exclaimed.

"Too late for me," she was about to say, but the words died on her lips, and she left him in his error; but when he said, with emotion, "*I* would have trusted *you* through years of silence and suspense," she exclaimed, "O do not speak to me in that way, Adrien, remember, there are sufferings that lie dormant, there are thoughts that sleep and must not be awakened. There is a calmness that lasts as long as memory can be kept at bay. O that I should be thus speaking to you!"

"Gertrude, there can be no peace in ——"

“Who spoke of peace? Did I not say calmness? Do you think I ever dream of peace?”

“O, my God!” Adrien ejaculated, in a tone of the deepest feeling. “This is worse than I feared. Gertrude, now we must speak the whole truth to each other, I must know how you came to marry as you did.” In a low but firm voice, she answered, “Despairing of ever seeing you again, believing that you had abandoned me, bewildered by the fear of a marriage I abhorred, grateful for a love which on that very day was revealed to me — when my mind was almost distracted — I was wrought upon — persuaded ——” Adrien turned pale; and clenching his hand, uttered a word which did not reach her ears, and she continued, “I have suffered not more, perhaps, than I deserve, but more than you can understand. I should not have dared to speak the truth, I should not have shown you the real state of my mind, and of my heart, if I had not felt that in you, and in myself—in our past

history—in our present strange meeting, there was that which would forbid us from seeking, in this brief intercourse, anything but the consolation of knowing that we have not wilfully been untrue to each other. That I have been false to myself, unjust to one whose great sin it has been to love me too much, God knows I confess ; but you I have not injured. O no. Each day I live I feel more deeply, perhaps, that ‘He whose you are, and whom you serve,’—ay, I heard you say those words not long ago,—He has dealt mercifully with you, and broken to pieces, for your sake, the worthless object of your ill-directed love.”

“Gertrude, you must not say, you must not feel this. With both of us He has dealt with the severe kindness of a father ; our hearts may break, but we must submit and adore.”

“Teach me, then, to submit ; teach me to adore : you have been the angel with the drawn sword in my path ; sheath it if you can, and

show me the way. Once before you pointed to it; it lay then in a smooth and flowery road; now it must be through a narrow and thorny one; but perhaps a light may rise upon it. You toil enough amongst the poor outcasts of this world's making, and may have a more arduous task to perform now."

Adrien's eyes flashed with a bright expression of love and of hope. "Gertrude, I have felt, ever since I first set eyes on you—O do not be afraid of looking back, dearest; do not shudder at the thoughts of what might have been, but which now can never be. There, in that first meeting, in our love, in our parting, with misgivings but with hope, in our irrevocable separation,—ay, I can speak of it without faltering, though God only knows how hard a struggle it has been to submit,—in this our strange reunion, I see, I feel, I bless His guiding hand. O Gertrude, we shall not have met, we shall not have loved, we shall not have suffered in vain; and not in vain have

gone through this trying hour, if He deigns to use me as His instrument to re-awaken in you, in your strong will and ardent spirit, the deep enthusiasm of a real vocation, the one resolution which masters every passion, and treads under its feet every sorrow, every anguish, every discouragement. He had a purpose for both of us I know it, I feel it. . Never let us say, even when we suffer most acutely, 'Would we had never met.' *I have never done so, Gertrude !*"

"Nor I," she faintly murmured.

"My dearest—I may call you so, for nothing on earth is so dear to me as you—my dearest, let us so live, let us so die, that to all eternity we may say, 'Thank God that we met.' Thank God that we understood the meaning of our love, the meaning of our sufferings, and recognised in them the source of higher fruits of virtue and of love than happiness could ever have yielded. Since the first day I saw you something impelled me to watch you, to pray for you, to feel that I was

to influence your destiny. Once, for a while——” he paused, there was a swelling in his heart which he could hardly subdue, but mastering his emotion he went on, “That dream passed away; I saw not that I had mistaken God’s purpose, but the way in which it was to work, and I hoped that in the end we should not have met in vain. Now I am sure of it. Now a light has flashed through the gloom; now you too will draw courage and strength from past and from present sorrow. Oh, Gertrude, our two hearts are bruised in the fierce trial we have past and are now passing through. Let each pang that we endure prove a blessing to others. Let innumerable good deeds and earnest efforts be the fruit of our sufferings; and then on the day when every tear, every sigh, every cup of cold water is counted, shall we not say, if by His infinite mercy we both stand on His right hand, ‘Thank God that we met!’”

Both were silent,—both were overcome. Their

hands were joined in silence, and they withdrew. Another had been near them, and every word of that conversation had been heard. "It is easy for them to be resigned," Maurice said to himself, as he tossed to and fro on his narrow couch that night; "but for me, for me, who stand between them and happiness, it is too hard a task,—too dreadful a fate. Well, it may be simplified one of these days,—my life may be cut short."

The pain in his head and in his heart seldom left him now; but still it is wonderful how people suffer and live on. He saw Adrien the next day, and they spoke kindly to each other. Both subdued the feelings which would have led them to turn away from the other; for Maurice could not look calmly upon the man whom Gertrude not only had, but still, loved, nor Adrien on him who had betrayed his confidence, and hurried her into a sinful and miserable marriage. It had been an act of heroic virtue on his part to forbear from expressing to Gertrude his indignation at her

husband's conduct ; and the friendly though grave manner with which he addressed him was one of the greatest conquests over himself which he had ever achieved.

At the hour when the emigrants met on the deck, Maurice said to Gertrude, "You had better not stay in this close cabin, Lady-Bird. It is a beautiful day, I believe. The sea is quite calm ; there are not many more evenings to come before we reach New York. Go and breathe the fresh sea air."

"Will *you* come ?" she said timidly.

"No ; I do not feel inclined to move. Leave me that book you were reading this morning." She did so, and arranged the cushions of the couch for him. He took her hand and kissed it. She lingered a moment near the door ; he opened the book and read ; she went away, and he closed it. Deep and sad were his musings that night, and once or twice he murmured Mary's name ; and the stillness of the sea was

irksome, and he now dreaded as much as he had wished that this hated passage should end. His manner to Gertrude was very kind now; those bursts of irritability which used to recur so frequently ceased altogether. He wrapped her tenderly in his own cloak when the wind was cold; he borrowed books for her; and if she was not well, he thought of a variety of little things to relieve her; but he could not bear now a smile from her. Truly her smiles were very unlike what they used to be. Perhaps he felt this. He had ceased to be jealous; he knew everything now, and he feared nothing more. Hatred and resentment had all given way to self-reproach and profound dejection.

One night, at that time, he composed the following rambling lines, and set them as it were in his own mind to the murmur of the waves :

I knew a noble goodly tree that lent my youth its shade,
To blight it with insidious art was the return I made.
I knew an Ivy branch that clung with shelt'ring love to me,
I little thought that faithful bough would once forsaken be.

I knew a bright, a blooming flower, and gazed on it too long,
 I snatched it rudely from its stem and did it grievous wrong.
 I loved them all, I wronged them all ; I bear a heavy load,
 I see no gleam of light to cheer my sad and lonely road.
 If I could die ! but death comes not to those who want it most ;
 I snatched a moment's joy,—alas ! I counted not the cost.
 The waves are whispering Mary's name—once, once, I loved her well.
 O Lady-Bird ! my broken flower——

There the pencil fell from his hand, and the
 unfinished verses on the floor near the couch.

That night and the following ones, Adrien spoke to his poor people, and Gertrude listened, and for a while afterwards they talked together. As once before, the fire that burned in his fervent soul kindled a spark in hers. When he spoke of a life of effort and of virtue she felt capable of anything ; as long as he stood by her side she understood how short was this life, how worthless was everything but the prospect of another. She learnt more and more of the meaning of those high spiritual truths which he sought to impart to her ; but to learn is not to feel, and knowledge and grace are as distinct as the shadow and the substance, as a dream and an action. She could

not acquiesce in the sacrifice of a final separation. She struggled against the acknowledgment of its necessity. Her tongue never uttered a word, but the deep impassioned language of her eyes protested against it, when with faltering accents he spoke of it. Yes, with faltering accents, for in his heart also a fearful combat had arisen.

There is no height of virtue, no strength of faith, no length of time spent in continual advances in holiness and in goodness, that secure a man against temptation, that place him beyond the reach of startling impulses to evil. Adrien was in danger during those days, in which everything seemed to combine against him. In danger of self-deceit, in danger of mistaking the cause of that deep interest which would have made him ready to lay down his life for the sake of her virtue and her happiness,—he saw, he felt his influence over her; a long, if not a final separation awaited them. He feared to lose time—he returned too often to her side. Every

moment that could be snatched from duties of religion and of charity, which he never neglected, he devoted to her; but did it make him less eloquent that the subjects which he spoke of were those which lend the deepest pathos, and inspire the most ardent enthusiasm in those who have ever felt their influence and understood their scope? Did it make his pale face less beautiful in her eyes that it had gained that paleness in long night-watches by the bed of poverty and of suffering? Did the blessings that were poured upon him every day and every hour by the poor creatures that surrounded him make her admire or love him less?

They stood on the brink of a precipice and knew it not; perhaps while he was lending her his aid to scale the rocks, and mount to the heights where he longed to lead her, he was unconsciously losing his own footing. Perhaps she knew more of the secret perils of her own heart—she had had more cause to mistrust it—but perhaps also

she feared less the first approaches of evil. She had but one care, but one thought, but one object, and she knew what it was. There was no self-deception in her; she gave way to the unresisted influence of feelings that seemed too powerful to be withstood, that made her cling to his presence as to a safeguard against the long anguish she had endured, and shrank from enduring again.

They had sat together in the same spot where they first had met, on a calm and lovely evening which had succeeded a stormy day; the wind had been violently contrary till then, now it seemed to second man's wonderful agent, and to impel them along the ocean with a rapidity that carried joy to the hearts of many weary and worn-out passengers. Glad voices had said that day, "Now we shall soon arrive; a very few days more, and we shall be at the end of this tedious voyage." "The end of this voyage!" Gertrude had said to herself, and it was like the announcement of the sentence of death to the condemned

criminal. They had sat together a long time; the sky was pure and bright with its thousand stars, and the moon made its road of light on the waves, which were gently rising and falling after their recent agitation, like the sobs of a child whose passion is subsiding. They had spoken of their arrival; she had asked if she should see him again when he returned from the settlement he was to visit. She asked it with a look that thrilled through his heart; she had turned pale when he hesitated; when he had assented there was a flash of joy in her eyes which carried him back to the day when he first promised to go to Lifford Grange. All the past rushed upon him at that moment, with a startling power. He felt she loved him *as* then, *more* than then; a wild involuntary joy, mingled with a sensation of terror and remorse, shot through his heart. He had meant never to see her again after these days of constrained intercourse—now he had agreed to do so. He had done *wrong*.

Few people know what is the awakening of that consciousness in those who have in earnest lived a life of continual self-discipline, who have walked under the Almighty eye, till they have learned to shudder at the first approaches of sin. In that instant he was called to the bedside of one of the emigrants who was dying, and to that scene he carried his wounded conscience, and his intense agitation ; but there is that great blessing attending a course such as his had been, that in the first instance no agitation interferes with practical duty, so habitual has self-control become ; and secondly, that agitation never can last long, even though grief and fear, or self-reproach, may prevail. He soothed the mental agony of his poor patient, even as if he had not been suffering himself. He suggested to him every thought that could awaken contrition, and supply in a case of absolute impossibility those spiritual supports which were far out of his reach. He

saw him grow calm, and sink by degrees into a kind of sleep, and he remained by his side, praying ardently.

How strange it is, how marvellous it seems sometimes, that there are human beings who *never* pray, who do not know what it is to send up those cries for strength, for guidance, for rescue,—which burst from other hearts with such vehemence, that they never wield an instrument which effects so much in this world, and beyond it!—which, like the trumpets that overthrew the walls of Jericho, can break down with its feeble strength the might of every obstacle, and the arms of every foe. He knew, he now saw the extent of the abyss he had neared; there was that which *he* could lay hold of,—there was a staff he could grasp, and which has never yet failed under the heaviest weight that has been trusted to it. Strong in Him who is mighty to save, all his fears were for her,—her to whom he had once hoped to be a guide

and a blessing. She, in whom he had first awakened the energy of an hitherto dormant faith; she, whom he had loved and prayed for so long, so unceasingly—was she to be abandoned to a sullen despair, an aimless life, and a hopeless heart? He prayed it might not be so. He accepted everything, offered up everything; but asked that, if possible, although he saw no way to it, they might part, not as they had parted that day,—not as they would part, unless she learnt what he could not, and what none but God could teach her.

It did not seem at that moment as if the prayer were heard. She was musing on that last hour they had spent together, with no misgivings then, nor with any self-reproach. She felt that she could struggle no longer, that it was in vain to strive with destiny. She impiously murmured, "O, if I must not love him, why did Heaven thus bring us together!" and then a sudden intense wish for freedom rushed like a

hurricane over her soul. It seemed to suggest thoughts which she dared not frame in words. Why was she bound by an irrevocable chain? Why *must* she be miserable? Why had one rash act, one fatal impulse, sealed her doom for ever? "Until death us do part," floated in her ears. Death—death alone could break that chain. Then for an instant, then as once before, a vision of freedom passed before her, not as a deliberate thought,—far, far less a hope. But she could not escape the consciousness that this dreadful idea had shot through her mind like a dark phantom.—"If *he* were to die, I should be free." It found no verbal utterance; but the rapid mental protest against it attested its existence.

She remained on the deck that night, and then slowly sought the cabin, where her husband was asleep. She sat down with a book in her hand, the same book out of which he had been reading by the lamp he had left burning. His sleep

was disturbed; he spoke incoherent words, and moved restlessly about. It was late before she lay down in her berth. Every now and then she woke up, as he moaned and murmured, and once she asked him if he was suffering? He was asleep again, and she closed her eyes; and the ship went on its way, and the hours elapsed, and the morning dawned, and every one was stirring within those wooden walls. Who knows what a day may bring forth? The sun shines on the evil and on the good, and the morning of one day is like the morning of another; but the days themselves! O, they are as different sometimes from those that precede and that follow them, as Earth is from Purgatory, and Purgatory from Heaven.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Forgive me that thou couldst not love ! it may be that a tone
 Yet from my burning heart may pierce through thine when I am
 gone,
 And thou perchance mayst weep for him, on whom thou ne’er hast
 smiled.”

Mrs. HEMANS.

“ In her chastened soul,
 The passion-coloured images of life,
 Which with their sudden startling flush awoke
 So oft those burning tears, have passed away.” *Ibid.*

“ Yet I was calm ; I knew the time
 My breast would thrill before thy look,
 But now to tremble were a crime ;
 We met, and not a nerve was shook.”

BYRON.

WHEN Maurice awoke from a troubled sleep
 the next day, the pain in his head which had
 been more or less troubling him since he had
 embarked was more violent than ever ; his limbs

ached, and a feverish thirst parched his lips. He called Gertrude and asked for some water. In taking back the glass from him she felt that his hand was burning; and laying her cold one on his forehead started almost at the scorching heat it found there. "Maurice," she gently said, "Do you feel ill? I am sure you are not well." He raised his eyes slowly to hers and shook his head. She made some little arrangements for his comfort, and went to get him some tea. When she brought it back he tried to eat a piece of biscuit, but could not.

"Maurice," she again repeated, with a kind of nervous anxiety, "I am *sure* you are ill. You must see the doctor."

"The doctor! No; he will do me no good, and his rough disagreeable manner will drive me wild. I will not see him; open the window, and let me breathe the fresh air, and then come and sit by me."

She did so. There was something peculiar

in his manner; he had not looked at her in that way for a long time, perhaps never before, with a sort of calm tenderness, "Will you read something to me, Gertrude, out of this book?" He drew from his bosom a little book of poetry which Mary had written out for him. "I should like to hear you read what *she* wrote." The book opened at a passage out of Longfellow's "Psalm of Life." Her voice trembled as it uttered the words—

"And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still like muffled drums are beating
Funeral marches to the grave."

Looking up she saw that his hand was pressed on his heart as if it counted its pulsations.

"Why do you make me read to you these things?" she hastily exclaimed, and rapidly turned over the pages of the manuscript.

"Your voice does me good; read on, Gertrude, read on. It is the only music I can hear now. It sounds like an echo of the strains I once


heard. Last night I dreamed that I was broken on the wheel, and that you were singing to me all the time in a low, soft voice that hushed my groans into silence. Read on; you do not know what your reading of these verses is to me. 'Whose touch upon the lute chords low, had stilled his heart so oft.' Were not those lines in a poem that you used to repeat years ago, in the Chase,—something about the might of earthly love. Have you forgotten them?"

"No; but I will not repeat them now; they are too exciting, and you must try to sleep, you are feverish." "Feverish!" he re-echoed, and a strange smile flitted over his lips. There was a burning fever in his veins. She read in a low voice for some time, and then she stopped, thinking he was asleep. She remembered, at that moment, how from a boy he had loved her. She thought how changed he was, since the time that with a cloudless brow, and a glowing cheek, and a sparkling eye, he used to make plans for

the future, and speak of art and fame with so much feeling and fire. She looked at his sunken cheek, his thin hand, the grey hairs that were visible here and there amongst his dark locks, and yet he was scarcely twenty-five years old. What had blighted his youth? What had checked his promising career? What had drawn him away from the tender and watchful love that had been given to him in childhood, and confirmed in youth?—what, but that fatal passion which had outweighed even conscience and duty, and survived even jealousy and despair?

He opened his eyes, and looked uneasily about him. “Lady-Bird,” he whispered, “you will not hate me when I am dead?” She started, and laying her hand upon his mouth, answered in a hurried manner: “O, for God’s sake, do not talk in that way, Maurice!”

“Why not. If you know what a comfort it is to me to think that I shall not always stand between you and happiness.” The colour left



her cheek. What could she say? Did she not deserve that he should say this? but it was dreadful. There are ideas that pass through the mind calmly, but which appear too shocking when suggested by another.

"You make me very miserable, Maurice, speaking to me thus." He raised himself in his bed, and leaning upon his arm, with his other hand he clasped hers, and looked into her eyes with those eyes which she had once wondered if she could wish never to see again.

"Do I make you miserable, Lady-Bird? Yes, I know I do,—I know I have done so. The consciousness of it has been my long agony. I wish you could sympathise with me for once before I die,—that once you could hear without turning away the outpouring of my heart. That is why I spoke, just now, of what gives me consolation."

"Not to me, not to me!—This is dreadful. O Maurice! Maurice!" She hid her head in

the bed-clothes, and he fell back exhausted. In a moment he said, "I have not been trying to work on your feelings, Gertrude. I believe what I say, or I should not have said it. I know too well all your kindness, your pity, and what must be your——" The word was unuttered; it was hope he was going to say, but he felt it conveyed a too cruel reproach to himself and to her; but he continued with agitation: "Your kindness, I accept. I thank you for these tears; but, O keep your pity,—you should have pitied me before, but not now."

"Maurice!" she exclaimed impetuously, raising her head, "You must not—you shall not feel thus. I am sure you are not as ill as you think; if you were you ought to have seen the doctor long ago. You must see him instantly."

A wretched recollection crossed her mind then how she had heard from Adrien, that this man was unskilful and negligent, but there was no help for it now, and she sent for him. It was a

long while before he came. There was a great deal of illness in the ship, and Adrien was accompanying him through the infirmary of the lower deck, compelling his attention to every case in succession, and refusing to let him leave the most wretched amongst them, to go and attend the sick passenger who had sent for him. He little thought who it was that was counting the minutes, and watching every sound. When he came there was little comfort to be found in his presence. He was one of the worst specimens of that class of men that used to be, and still sometimes are sent out in emigrant ships,—men who accept the insufficient and miserable pittance thus afforded them, because they have neither the skill nor character with which to succeed elsewhere. He shook his head, and said that Maurice was very ill, but not dangerously so, as far as he could see. He had a great deal of fever, and there had been evidently previous depression of the nervous system which aggravated the case.

There was acute pain in the limbs, and continual thirst. He sent some medicine and promised if possible to see him again in the evening. His abrupt and familiar manner had been painful to them both. He joked by the bed-side. If a sick-room is sometimes a fitting place for jests, it certainly was not so in this case. When he closed the door, Gertrude bent over the bed and said, "You see, dear Maurice, you are not so very ill." She had never, since their marriage, called him "dear Maurice." He knew it, and the blood rushed with violence to his very temples.

At the time when she usually went upon the deck he showed her the watch, and pointed to the hour. "No, no, not to-night," she said, "I would not on any account leave you, Maurice. I won't," she added, with one of her old smiles, as he murmured that he wished her to go. "Well, I will let you stay—you are right, I think, not to leave me. I feel very strangely at

times, and I fancy the fever is increasing. There, sit down opposite to me, and put the lamp on that side, so that the light may fall upon you. Is the sea very rough to-night?"

"No; it is quite calm. I see from here the moon shining on the waves."

"Full many a fathom deep."

"What are you saying?"

"I don't know; I was thinking of a funeral at sea which I once saw a long time ago. But there was a priest on board. I am glad I went to see Mary before I came away. You will be always kind to Mary, won't you, Gertrude?" His eyes closed, and she felt a great difficulty in sitting quietly on, listening to the broken sentences that dropped from his lips.

He was in that state between waking and dreaming in which the thoughts seem more busy with the past than with the present. There is always something awful in the ramblings of the mind, even when no secret sufferings are disclosed; but

when there are, and when the listener is and has been the cause or the sharer of such griefs, those long and silent watches are hard to bear. Gertrude tried to read, tried not to think. She sought to stifle memory, to look neither backward nor forward, to banish from her mind all thought but of the present moment; the relief that could be given, the kind word that could be spoken. But it would not do. Back came upon her the recollections of her mother's death, of all that had accompanied and followed it. Her dying form seemed stretched before her on that bed where Maurice was lying, and she gazed on his pale face with mingled sensations of grief and fear.

The hours went by, and still the doctor came not. It grew very late, and he became gradually worse. He was not light-headed now; but the pain was increasing, and his breathing was oppressed. She felt alarmed, but was afraid of leaving him to call for assistance. Hurrying out for an instant she caught sight of one of the stewards

and begged he would find the doctor, and entreat him to come directly. When she returned, Maurice called her in a low voice and made her sit down close to his pillow. "Now listen to me, Lady-Bird, for I can speak now, and perhaps for the last time I call you by that name. Forgive me all I have ever made you suffer. It would have been better for you that I had never been born; but if I die now, then my life will not have done you much harm: will it, Gertrude? You are very young still, and you may be happy a long time. You will forgive me, when you *are* happy, for having loved you too much during my short life,—and that my love made me selfish, and wicked, and mad. Do not weep, Lady-Bird—do not hide your face from me. Will you kiss me once?" She passed her arm round his neck, and pressed upon his fevered lips a kiss such as he had dreamt of, but never felt before. A sudden faintness came over him, he gasped for breath—"One of the

draughts—give it me quick—I am choking.” Her eyes blinded with tears, a mist before her sight, she poured out the medicine into a glass, and gave it him. He swallowed it, and exclaimed, “How strangely it tastes!”

What horrible vision has passed before her? What sudden terror has made her cheek livid, as she kneels by the lamp and reads the label on that empty bottle, “Laudanum, Poison.” There is a miraculous strength in fear and in anguish, for she neither staggered nor fainted, but rushing wildly to the door, she called out in a tone of such agony for the doctor, that two or three persons started up at once out of their beds and ran for him. It was at the dead of night, and some awoke in their cabins and heard that scream, and thought it was the cry of a drowning wretch. She sat by the narrow bed, and put his head on her breast, and gazed upon it, as if her eyes had turned to stone and her brain to fire. “If he were to

die I should be free." Is there a fiend in hell cruel enough to remind her in that hour of those words, which she had trembled at yesterday, and which to-day resemble the despairing cry of the condemned when their sentence is pronounced. It was an appalling sight, that visage of hers bent over his, but so placed that he could not see it. He complains of strange sensations, and her heart dies within her, but she speaks calmly, for she possesses a power of endurance which has never yet been called forth. She feels that if he should die, the ceaseless anguish of remorse on earth at least will be her portion; but while there is life there is hope, and God's mercy is immense, as boundless as her despair.

The doctor came, disturbed, angry; many are ill and dying at once in that miserable ship, and they have been clamouring for him all night. "Mr. Redmond can't be much worse than when he saw him last." She has taken the bottle and placed herself between him and the bed,

and she whispers in his ear, "I gave him *that*." He starts back and mutters an oath, "Then, by G——, it's all over with him." She does not faint, but wrings her hands and says, "Try, try to save him, do what you can;" and then she stands by his side while he employs all the means common in such cases, all the expedients which can be resorted to at such a moment, and in breathless silence watches his every movement with agonizing anxiety. "I can do no more," he said at last, "and I cannot stay any longer; I am wanted elsewhere. You must keep him awake if you can, it all depends upon that: any way you can, talk to him, rouse him. I must go." She seized his arm, and with a look that startled even his stolid nature, she said,

"Tell Adrien d'Arberg to come here this instant. Tell him Maurice Redmond is dying, and that it is his wife that has killed him." She knelt before her husband, she did not now hide her face from him, she spoke to him with

a voice, she looked at him with eyes, which seemed to rouse him from the growing stupor that was invading his senses. She called to him aloud, and raised his hands in hers and convulsively pressed them.

The door opened, and Adrien was by her side, pale, firm, and composed. She murmured, without looking towards him, "What will become of me, if he dies!" Maurice's eyes closed, and he no longer seemed to hear or to feel. She turned then and gave Adrien a look of such dreadful despair, that he turned still paler than before. He laid his hand on her shoulder, and said, "Gertrude, pray, pray with all the strength of your despair, and let me watch by his side. This night we shall spend together, and then whatever God ordains. Whatever happens——"

"We part for ever," she slowly uttered, and he said, "*Amen.*"

"This is a vow," she added.


"As solemn as this hour," he replied. "Now

go and pray, that God may have mercy on you and on me."

Then, Adrien strove with all his strength, with all his skill, with all the resources of intelligence and experience. He supplied the doctor's place, and with all the energy of his calm but intense volition sought to recall animation in that sinking frame, to struggle with the fatal sleep that was invading it. He felt strong with an almost supernatural strength; he felt that the safety of an immortal soul might be, that the future peace or the unspeakable misery of another *was* at stake; and he wrestled there with the mortal enemy, as Jacob wrestled with the Angel in the mysterious hour of mystical strife and dearly won victory. He offered up his whole existence on that day, in exchange for the boon he passionately implored. Life for him, grace for her, was the cry of his deep soul; for himself, the cross, the desert's scorching air, the missionary's path, or the martyr's grave.

Human efforts, at times, are extraordinarily blessed. There is a force in prayer,—there is a strength in sacrifice,—there are mysteries in grace,—there are strange dealings with men's souls,—marvellous changes in destinies, and wonderful triumphs of faith. Maurice's life hung on a thread that night, and all the while Gertrude prayed some of those wordless prayers,—those cries of the heart which none but God can hear; confessed her sins with agonizing contrition, and, when her brain grew sick with terror and her soul waxed faint within her, convulsively called upon her who prays for us to Jesus, when we can no longer pray for ourselves. He who had ever been in his Father's house, and she who was returning to it in that hour, both knelt by that bedside. Each made a promise, each recorded a vow, and in the fiery trial of that night a new heart was given her. O, if in His mercy God would cancel the sentence of death which was writing

upon that face its unmistakeable character,—if He would give back to her keeping that loving heart which had well nigh ceased to beat, and open again those eyes which else would haunt her to the grave,—would not life be too short for gratitude, and earth not wide enough for her zeal? What were now past sufferings in her sight? *Nothing* to the pangs she was now enduring,—like the tears of childhood by the anguish of manhood! She vowed to love her husband. O, she loved him already. A single hair of his head had grown precious to her heart, and her burning lips were pressed to his cold hands with feelings that hope and joy could never give. Truly, as Adrien was striving and watching by her side that livelong night, sharing and mastering its terrors and its anguish, she felt that an angel had come to her aid; but earthly passion passed away, even then, from her soul, and never from that day forth did she think of him but as one of those



ministering spirits who lead the way to Heaven, but are not destined to walk the common paths of life by our side. Maurice opened his eyes, and saw them both kneeling by him. His brain was dizzy, and he gazed strangely upon them. Nothing perhaps could have roused him from that deadly stupor so powerfully as their presence, and they spoke to him in words that recalled his soul from the confines of death. She threw her arms round his neck, she pressed him to her heart, she called him her husband, and told him she loved him. He sat up in his bed and pointed to Adrien. "Once, but not now," she said in a low voice. "Believe me, dear Maurice, by all I have endured this night,—by all we have suffered since our marriage, you may believe me now. My love is yours henceforward—yours alone. I gave it you, Maurice, in an awful hour, and one of the most dreadful trials that ever was sent to crush a stubborn spirit has not been sent in vain."

He read in her eyes the truth of those words, and the rush of conflicting feelings they awakened was almost too much for his enfeebled frame. There were still alternations of hope and of fear with regard to his health, but from that hour he rallied. The fever had been subdued through the very means which had brought him to the verge of death, but from which he had so miraculously recovered.

When he became strong enough to converse he sent for Adrien, and wished to see him alone. He told him all that he had only suspected before. He spoke with detestation of his own conduct, and implored his forgiveness for the breach of trust he had been guilty of in his regard ; and he whom he had so much injured heard that humble confession, and soothed the bitterness of self-accusation with all the tender charity of one who had ceased to feel anything as keenly as the offence which that sin had been against the majesty of the

Most High. Maurice was soon able to rise from the bed of suffering, of death, and of deliverance. The day before the vessel reached New York, he earnestly entreated to be carried on deck, and pointed to the place where he had once suffered so much, and he asked Gertrude to sit there with him. She came, looking pale and worn, but serene as a summer evening after a violent storm. The brightness of her eyes was not quenched; but it was a different light shining through them than had ever beamed in them before. An unspeakable peace was reigning in her soul, and hovering over her every moment. She looked like one who "Had been she knew not where, and seen what she could not declare." She *had* verily gazed into the abyss, and stood on the brink of an awful chasm, and now her feet were on the rock. She looked up to Heaven with unutterable thankfulness, and the eyes that were raised in adoring gratitude fell tenderly on him who

from the very jaws of death had been won back by "the force of prayer."

She had not much to learn in the way she was now beginning to tread. She had seen it, that way, from her childhood up. The seed had been sown long ago, but it had withered away for lack of moisture. No gentle showers could have pierced the hard surface, no light wind could bow down that indomitable will; therefore it was that God, who had marked her for his own, had made all his waves pass over her; and not in vain had this last and tremendous storm well-nigh overwhelmed her. She knew it—she felt it; her past life now rose before her as a miracle of mercy, a prodigy of love. She remembered her kind and stern old instructor's words—"If light sufferings are not enough to bring you to His feet, God will in His mercy send you some of those strange trials which break what would not bend, and crush what would not yield." But He had not crushed her—no; He had bowed her down under His Almighty

hand, and showed her in one horrible hour what His wrath can do; and then His saving hand was stretched out, and she stood on the shore, strong and erect with the strength He had given her, with the energy He had implanted in her.

When the hour approached for the last meeting of the emigrants on deck, for the last words that Adrien was to address to them, Maurice turned to her and said with emotion,

“Will you stay or go?”

“Stay, if you like it,” she answered with perfect serenity.

“He saved my life, Gertrude, that night, did he not?”

“And more, far more than my life,” she answered and drew closer to his side; but he murmured as she did so, “Would to God I had died.”

Steadily Gertrude gazed on Adrien, as he advanced to his accustomed place. She breathed an inward thanksgiving that her heart did not throb wildly as it used to do at his approach. She

felt astonished at what is granted to those who surrender themselves wholly into His care who can rule the waves and subdue the storm. She pressed her husband's hand in hers and said, "May God bless and reward him, Maurice," and he fervently uttered, "Amen." That Amen recalled to her the solemn one pronounced not long ago by those lips on which she had once hung with all but idolatrous worship. He spoke, and she listened calmly. He gave a few plain practical instructions, a few kind words of advice to his poor fellow-passengers—to those especially whom he was to lose sight of the next day, perhaps never to meet on earth again. But his voice did not falter, nor did her cheek blanch. When the words "Farewell, and God Almighty be with you, and bless you, and guide you wherever you go, and send his angels to bring you on your way," were pronounced, she bent her head as if to receive his blessing. When he said, "Pray for me, my friends; pray for one to whom

great mercy has been shown ; pray that his long delays in the upward path may be forgiven, and that while striving for other men's souls he may save his own," she joined her hands and prayed that in Heaven they might meet ; and the few tears she shed, and which fell on Maurice's hand, were as pure as the source from which they flowed. There was no passion in that grief, no bitterness in that parting.

When the crowd dispersed, Adrien came up to them and held out a hand to each. Maurice was dreadfully overcome. She wept softly and silently. "I leave in a boat early to-morrow," he said. "So now we part, and I know I carry away with me your kind wishes ; I reckon on your prayers."

"O Adrien! Adrien!" Maurice exclaimed. "Would you had ever reproached me."

"Hush, hush, dear Maurice," he rejoined ; "we have all three learned a deep lesson—the one lesson of life ; henceforward we have to practise it. By Heaven's immense and undeserved mercy we have

done no fatal injury to each other, though we have all more or less sinned and been near to great dangers; we have not any of us ruined or perverted a human soul, and that is a priceless blessing—we feel it in this parting hour: we have all suffered, and it has wrought good in us all; has it not, dear friend? You, who have been on the brink of the grave, and you,”—his voice faltered a little as he addressed himself to Gertrude—“who won back his life by your prayers, are bound by a double tie; and God’s claims upon you both are twofold since that day.”

“Do not take leave of us thus, dear, dear Adrien,” Maurice exclaimed. “Do not speak as if we were not to meet again for years.”

“God bless you both for ever!” he answered, and hastily moved away.

Gertrude hid her face on her husband’s shoulder, and both for a few minutes wept together. She was the first to dry her tears, and when he raised his eyes to hers there was not a cloud on her brow.

CHAPTER VIII.



“Be it enough
 At once to gladden and to solemnise
 My lonely life, if for thine altar here,
 In the dread temple of the wilderness,
 By prayer and toll and watching I may win
 The offering of one heart, one human heart—
 Bleeding, repenting, loving.”

MRS. HEMANS.

“I stand upon the threshold stone
 Of my ancestral hall ;
 I hear my native river moan,
 I see the night o'er my old forest fall.
 I look round on the darkening vale
 That saw my childhood's plays ;
 The lone wind in its rising wail
 Has a strange tone ; a voice of other days—
 But I must rule my swelling breath.”

Ibid.

THE shades of evening had fallen, and there was silence in the ship ; Maurice and Gertrude had retired into their cabin. Adrien was, for the last time, sleeping alongside those towards


whom his labour of love was now accomplished. The moon was just rising in a cloudless sky, and the vessel was steadily and rapidly advancing on its course. Most of the passengers had been rejoicing that on the morrow they were to land, and begin a new existence in the New World they had sought. There had been much merriment at the evening meal, where, for the last time, the same company had met. They were looking forward to the future with eagerness; but some few of them felt regret at leaving the semblance of a home which that huge ship had presented. Many kind words had been spoken, and farewells exchanged. Land would soon be in sight; by the time of sunrise next day their eyes would behold it. This was probably the last thought of those who went to sleep on board the brave ship that night.

It glided along, and the wind was in its favour. The watchers saw the lights gleaming along the coast. The sleepers dreamt of the past—the

sleepless of the future. No unwonted sounds stirred the silent air—no presentiment of evil disturbed that repose. But suddenly through the vast ship there ran a word, at which the watchers started as one man, the sleepers awoke, the boldest trembled, and the reckless shuddered. “At midnight a cry arose—” “The ship is on fire!” and from each one that heard it there came a cry, a groan, or a sigh, such as the hearts of men send forth when death is at their door. Then it was that they showed of what metal they were made. There was no time for thought, or for prayer, save a short, hurried one for mercy and aid. The word of command was given, the boats lowered, the passengers marshalled; the sea was calm, and the heavens serene. The sailors were brave, and the captain firm; but from the upper and lower decks there arose a sound more awful than the raging of the waves, more appalling than the crash of thunder; the confusion, the strife, the rushing to and fro, the

shouts and the prayers, the curses and the groans, grew with the advancing flames, and rose with the clouds of enveloping smoke.

There was one in that moment whose only thought was his wife, who, pale and motionless, was standing by his side, in silence preparing her soul to meet its Judge. But that hour was not come ; for their turn is arrived, and she is placed in the first boat, and her husband is in it too. The land is near, and will soon be gained. There is a mist before her sight ; but her eyes are fixed in one direction, her hands clasped together, and her lips moving in prayer. They stand on the shore, and a crowd gathers round them. The boats are putting out again ; women and children are weeping and wailing, and there are breathless supplications and loud cries from some, and a silence deeper than death in others, as they watch the blazing vessel, and by the lurid light it throws on the water are striving to discern the forms which the boats are conveying.



Gertrude is leaning on the edge of a narrow pier, and Maurice is by her side. They do not speak to each other, but their eyes and their thoughts and their fears are in unison; for they know that Adrien will be the last to leave that burning wreck while one human soul is in danger of perishing there. Once more the boats are gone back for those who tarried behind, and there runs a murmur through the crowd, as they rush forward to the brink of the waves—"This is the last time they can approach it; they cannot save them all." Gertrude shuddered, and ceased to look. She laid her head upon the stone wall on which she was leaning, and a trembling came over her; for the hands were few, and the ship burning now with uncontrollable rapidity, the flames were mounting to the sky, and a faint distant shout of despair—the dying cry of expiring hope—was wafted by the wind to those listening straining ears. She turned round and looked wildly around her, as if to ask for help, where no

help could be given. Maurice was gone. He could brook it no longer. Adrien must not die, and he live to see it.

There was a small shattered boat, which had been left aside until then, as too unsafe for use. He has commended himself to God, and called upon Mary; and in that little bark he makes for the scene of danger and death. He rows for the life of his friend; he nears the vessel; he reaches it at last. He pushes alongside the last boat that is leaving it, and with his whole remaining strength he calls on Adrien. He is there; his tall form conspicuous in the light that illumines the terrific scene,—a child in his arms, and another in his hand. The mother had been thrust into the boat that was departing, and with wild gestures was imploring him, whom in her distraction she fancied was an angel, to restore them to her arms. In an instant he perceived the little bark beneath; and springing into it at once, with the children he had saved from the

flames, he took the oars from Maurice, who fell back exhausted. The boat was leaking, the surge was dangerous, the children scared ; not a word was spoken ; there was no sound but the stroke of the oars, now wielded by a powerful arm.

The sun was just rising on that scene of horror and of mercy. When Gertrude at the edge of the waves met that bark as it landed, Maurice stepped on to the shore, went towards her, and murmured, "He is saved ;" then leaning upon her arm, he fainted. She uttered a short cry, and in an instant Adrien was by her side, and both saw at once what had happened. Maurice had broken a blood-vessel.

In the small inn of an American village Gertrude sat by the bedside of one who had greatly sinned and deeply suffered,—her dying and repenting husband. A priest from a neighbouring mission has been with him, received his confession, and administered the last sacraments of the Church. Adrien was watching in the next

room. There was a calm and beautiful expression on Maurice's face ; he was not merely resigned, but willing to die. That God should have granted him such a blessing as to give his life for the friend he had injured, and at one time hated, struck him with a sense of grateful astonishment. Gertrude's kindness, the tenderness of her voice and of her looks, which were inexpressibly soothing to him now, would not have been sufficient to allay the torments of self-reproach under different circumstances. They might even have awakened it more keenly than indifference. During the last few days he had reviewed the past with the most intense contrition, and, though he had resigned himself to live as a just expiation and a continual atonement, death was to him the highest boon that could have been granted to his weary and repentant spirit. He distrusted his own strength for the long journey of life, and blessed the merciful God that was withdrawing him from its snares and its perils.

He was capable of an heroic action, and it had been given to him to perform it. In deep humility he felt, "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace," for the peace of the absolved, of the pardoned, was his. The faith which had never been effaced from his soul was now again as bright and fervent as ever. His mind—long stored with images of beauty and dreams of harmony—readily turned to the vision of Heaven. He sent for Adrien, and gazed upon him with an unutterable expression, which was answered by these words, "But for you, dear friend, my earthly task would be over; you leave me to labour, and are going home early." A change came over his face, and detaining him by the hand he called Gertrude, who had withdrawn when Adrien came in. They never stayed with him together, but while one was watching him the other knelt in the next room. But now, he wished them both to remain. He made her stand on one side of the bed, and him on the other,

and gave a hand to each. Then he fixed his eyes upon her and said,

“Once more say that you forgive me, Gertrude.”

She bent over him and answered, “Rather forgive *me*, my husband. O Maurice, God once gave you back to my prayers ——”

“Ay,” he exclaimed, “and priceless was the boon *then* of the life restored, and lent for a few days. To die *then*, my beloved, would have been a deserved but a sad fate ; whereas *now, here, thus*, my wife, my friend, it is a blessing as great as his mercy —— Hush, do not interrupt me now. The time is short, and I have something to say to you both. First, dearest Gertrude, tell her whom I loved before, and only less than you, that in my dying hour I have blessed her. That here, round my neck, I have always worn the little medal which she placed there the first time that we parted. Tell her that through all my sins and my sufferings, I have never omitted to say

every day the short prayer she then gave me. Take it, Gertrude, and let Mary have it. And now listen, both of you, to my last words, my last wish, my last request. There is a thought that would give me inexpressible consolation in these my last moments. Adrien! Gertrude! I have stood between you and happiness during my life. O let it not be so after my death. Give me your hands—let me join them together—let me feel that you will both be happy when I am dead, that the memory of all I have made you suffer will only unite you more closely to each other, and that thoughts of tenderness and pity for one who sinned against you so deeply will be mixed with every recollection of the past.”

“Do you think I could ever feel anything but love and gratitude for you, Maurice?” she murmured almost inaudibly, and Adrien grasped more tightly the hand he was holding.

Maurice made a faint attempt to unite theirs, and articulated with effort, but with an imploring

expression, "Promise me that you will marry." She shook her head, and passed her arm round his neck. "For my peace, for my sake," he ejaculated; simultaneously she and Adrien joined their hands for one instant, and then bent over him in speechless emotion, for life was ebbing fast, and death approaching. A look of repose settled on his face, a faint smile played on his lips, and his spirit passed away. Adrien and Gertrude repeated the "De Profundis" before they rose from their knees, and then separated, only once to meet again,—by the side of Maurice's grave in the cemetery of New York. There they parted, with silent blessings and a mute farewell, their tears falling less in sorrow for the dead or for their own parting, than in memory of the past, with its buried affections and its chastened griefs. From that spot where for the last time they knelt together each went on his way,

"With heart subdued, but courage high."

On her arrival at New York Gertrude had

sought an abode in a convent, where for a short time she remained, and from thence wrote to Mary Grey, sending her Maurice's medal, and briefly stating the circumstances of his death, and her own intention to devote the rest of her life to the service of God, in whatever way it would seem His will to lead her.

In the first days of her widowhood she had entertained the hope that the religious life might be the lot that He had appointed her, but another duty, another consolation, a great and unexpected blessing was granted to one who felt alone in the world, and to whom it seemed as a token of forgiveness, and a direct gift from Heaven. A few months elapsed and Gertrude had a child. She loved it with all the tenderness which she had so long refused to its father; and when in her infant's face she saw again the eyes that had been so often bent upon her with unrequited affection, her tears fell fast on the little cheek that was closely pressed to her own.

She did not write to her own family, but Edgar Lifford, as soon as the news of her husband's death and afterwards of her son's birth had reached him, sent letters which, although couched in his usual formal style, were full of kindness and good feeling. He inquired after her worldly circumstances, and made her offers of assistance: she wanted but little, and that only for her child; poverty was her choice, and labour her happiness. Amongst the poor Irish who are continually landing in America she found every kind of suffering to alleviate, of sorrow to console. It was her delight to watch for the arrival of the emigrant ships, and to give a welcome to the lonely heart, a helping hand to the helpless. Children who had lost their parents during the passage, widows who had seen their husbands die in their arms, the girl who had sinned and longed to repent, the father who had babes, and no wife to care for them,—found a friend in the

pale woman in deep mourning who never turned away from their tale of woe,—and who with her child in her arms, and later in her hand, knew the road to their poor homes, and the way to their warm hearts. She was known in that foreign land by her old familiar name, and it became a byword of love in the mouths of the poor.

It was little Maurice that had taught it them. One day that he had brought in childish glee a “Lady-bird” home, he wondered at the tears that started in her eyes, even though she smiled at the same time. But she whispered, “That was mother’s name once,” and he lisped it often afterwards, and others learnt it of him. The sufferers in the hospitals asked for her. The poor in their hovels welcomed her. The children hung on the skirts of her black faded dress, and all who knew her face with its beauty, and her voice with its melody, and her smile with its

sweetness, would murmur as she passed along the crowded streets on her errands of mercy, "Heaven bless that fair Lady-Bird, who goes about doing good."

Some years elapsed, and then one day Gertrude received from her brother the following letter :

"MY DEAR GERTRUDE,—At last, after our long travels, we have returned to Lifford Grange, and I grieve to tell you that my father's health is in a very unsatisfactory state. He is much altered in every way,—both in body and mind. His memory is much impaired ; at least it is so in many respects, though in one instance alone it seems more lively than it was. I had imagined, my dear sister, that he had entirely forgotten you, for until quite lately he never made any allusion to you, or seemed to recollect your existence. But since we have returned to this place he has often spoken of you. He does not know that I am writing, but I have been consulting with Mr. Erving, and we both think that if you could come

to England, he would see you, and that it might work in him a favourable change.

“Indeed, my dear sister, he is in a very sad state. The extraordinary part of it is, that he seems to think himself—somehow or other—to blame about our poor mother’s death. It is a nervous fancy, but it preys much on his mind. He has chosen now to occupy the apartment in which she lived, and can seldom be persuaded to leave it, and when he does go out it is not beyond the park. I hear from Mary Grey that you have no intention of becoming a nun, though you lead the life of a Sister of Charity. There are good works to be done everywhere, and a very good one here, I am convinced. I wish I could write to you a persuasive letter, but it is not in my line. You would hardly know your father again,—his hair is quite white,—no one would think he was only fifty years old.

“I am afraid you will not understand from this letter how much I wish you to come. I

cannot be quite certain that my father will receive you, or that he will be willing to see your little boy, but Mrs. Redmond can give you a room at the cottage, if he does not invite you to remain here. I think very differently about many things from what I used to do. Perhaps it is the same with you, and that we may be surprised to find how much better we agree than formerly. I often go to Mrs. Redmond's cottage, and talk about you with Mary Grey. Pray write soon at all events, and believe me, your affectionate brother,

“EDGAR.”

Gertrude sat an instant absorbed in thought. It was a great emotion that was stirring her heart. Old thoughts, old places, the faint shadows of long departed dreams, the names of her father, her brother, Mary, Lifford Grange, and Stonehouseleigh, the living and the dead all rose before her, and for an instant her bosom heaved, and the old troubled look passed through

the depths of her eyes. She could not be glad to go home. For her the familiar scenes which exiles have sighed for, as a thirsty man longs for a cup of cold water, had no soothing charm. Hers were not griefs which could enter into the feeling of tenderness, "*pour ce bon vieux temps où j'étais si malheureuse.*" Old things had passed away,—new and blessed ones had arisen; and she loved the New World, where her child was born, where she had begun a life of virtue and of peace; but there hung too deep shadows on the path she had trodden—there was something too awful in her recollections of what she had once felt and had been—to allow of the fond and softening enjoyments of sympathetic association. But she was not the less grateful that her brother had sent for her; she did not the less readily prepare to go to that father, whose character she understood better than formerly, perhaps through the continual and deep examination she had made of her own.

* * * *

The room which for so many years his wife had occupied, Mr. Lifford now inhabited. There was not a single thing removed, or altered in it, since the day of her death. He was an old man in appearance, though not in reality,—not more amiable in manner, but yet very different from what he used to be. There is a great power in the words of a dying person; the heart must be hopelessly hardened that can withstand *truth* when uttered at such a time.

Mr. Lifford had been a self-deceiver from his youth upwards. He had shut out the voice of conscience with the same strength of volition with which he had resisted every will but his own. Father Lifford had spoken to him on his death-bed some of those words that *cannot* be shut out. He kept them at bay for a long while; but in a dangerous illness he had had abroad, and in the protracted weakness that followed it, they pursued him incessantly, and obliged him to hearken. But it was terror not

repentance, remorse not penitence that overcame him ; his wife's last gasping sigh,—his daughter's look when he approached her that day, were ever present before him. Did Gertrude think he had killed her mother by that scene which had been fatal to her ? This was the question he was perpetually asking himself ; and his memory became confused, and he felt as if that stern and beautiful face which he had never looked on with pleasure, and which he now longed to behold again, was haunting him continually, and would haunt him to all eternity with its silent reproaches.

When he returned to Lifford Grange, the impression became stronger than ever. He shut himself up in what had been his wife's apartment, and refused to see any one. Once Mr. Erving was admitted to him, and probed the wounds which had so long been concealed by an icy surface. He did not measure their depth, but guessed they were profound. Mr. Lifford had long neglected all religious duties, and

he now apparently gave himself up to a settled despair. Nothing roused him from this sullen dejection and silent apathy, except accidentally awakened recollections of the death-bed of his wife. He seemed to have forgotten everything about Gertrude's marriage, her widowhood, and the birth of her child; or at least he never alluded to these facts; but, as Edgar had said, named her sometimes, but as if he was speaking of somebody who was dead. Why he chose to live in his wife's rooms, nobody could understand, except those who know that remorse has sometimes the same instincts as affection. It was then that his son wrote to Gertrude, and counted the days till he received her answer.

She came on a summer evening back to the home of her youth, after years of absence. She came to it as people in a dream arrive in well-known places, and without surprise find everything different and yet nothing altered. Edgar

had met her at the station, and in his heavy and calm features an appearance of emotion was perceptible. He took her child in his arms and kissed him. There was another person also waiting at that station, whose long-disciplined heart was beating less calmly than usual, as she caught sight of Gertrude and her child; and, falling on her knees, threw her arms round the boy. "O Maurice!" was all she said; but when he asked in childish surprise, "Are you another mother?" she whispered "No, I am only Mary;" but she felt, and he seemed also to feel that his own mother did not love him more than Mary. He was consigned to her care, while the long-parted brother and sister drove away together along the well-known lanes, towards that house she had hated and fled from.

They spoke but little till they reached its gate. The woman at the lodge courtesied to her, and the rooks made their accustomed noise in the

branches over-head, as they drove through the avenue. "Gertrude," he suddenly said, "his mind is not right; he talks very strangely at times about you and my mother. We think you had better go to him at once. Have you the courage to do so?—He might be angry."

"I braved his anger too often in my wilfulness," she replied, "to shrink from it now, when I would give my life to comfort him."

For one moment she looked about her with a bewildered feeling as she entered the house. There was the same look, the same sound of the great clock, the same indefinable smell, the same sensation she knew so well. Was she dreaming of being Gertrude Lifford returning to Lifford Grange, or had the last years been a long dream compressed in the second of time between sleeping and waking? The old butler came up to her; she seized his hand, and then the floodgates were let loose for a moment. She gave a kind of cry, but soon was quite calm

again. "Now," she said to Edgar, "now at once; let me go to him, but be near us in case he should be too much agitated."

She walked through the narrow passage out of the hall, and up to the door of the room where he was,—that room with the pictures, the crucifix, and the couch! She knocked, and then went in. He looked up—what would she have done if he had not opened his arms, and cried "Gertrude!" she knew not, but he did so; and for the first time in their lives the father's and the daughter's lips met in one long embrace. "Gertrude," he whispered tremulously without letting her go—"Gertrude, I wanted you." He did not ask any questions; he spoke not of the past; perhaps he felt sufficiently absolved by that embrace from his worst fears. He did not show her any tenderness; it was not in his nature; but both felt that henceforward she was to be the only possible comfort of that cold and silent man, who sighed when she went away, but did not ask her to remain. He hated the

thought of the marriage she had made as much as ever, and could not bring himself to speak of her child ; but he was restless the next day till she returned, and her daily visits became to him what music is to the blind, or repose to the weary.

She took up her residence in Mrs. Redmond's cottage, and occupied what used to be Maurice's room. Every day she left that little, cheerful abode, which was as full as ever of flowers and of sunshine, and where her boy played with her under the old tree, or sat on Mary's knee, listening to nursery tales ; and through that same path which she had once trod in misery and despair, she walked to the gate of the Grange, and up the long avenue of yews, to the well-known room where her father always sat, and spent some hours with him. She used to bring her work, and sit opposite to him while he wrote ; and sometimes she read out loud, or walked with him on the terrace. He never appeared so tranquil as when she was present.

This strange mode of life was a trial to one whose character, although disciplined and exalted, was eager and enthusiastic still, and had been used to spend its fervour in toils and pursuits which were less hardships than enjoyments; but she had now but one object, one guiding principle, and duty had become the passion of her soul. The forms which memory recalled, the images of the dead and of the past which haunted those scenes, only strengthened her resolutions, and confirmed her patience. It had its reward, though it seemed long deferred.

One day that she was reading to him the French newspaper, which he had taken in for years, and the sight of which had turned her pale the first time it met her sight, she came to an account of the martyrdom of some of the Jesuit missionaries in China, and of the hair-breadth escape of others, who were still labouring in the same regions. Her eye glanced down the page, and faltered a little. "Why do you stop?"

her father asked, and subduing her emotion, she went on to read the following sentence :—

“ L'un de ces généreux apôtres, qui ont échappé presque par miracle à une mort effroyable, portait autrefois dans le monde un nom assez célèbre. Le Comte, maintenant le Père d'Arberg, dont les écrits ont si puissamment contribué au réveil religieux de la France, brave le trépas dans les contrées où son zèle l'a conduit, et la voix que jadis nous avons connue et admirée, annonce l'Evangile aux enfants de l'Asie. ”*

Mr. Lifford looked at his daughter, and her eyes met his. Another father and daughter might perhaps have spoken then, and a reciprocal pardon been sought and obtained, but this was not in their characters. She glanced once at the

* Amongst the generous missionaries who thus narrowly escaped the horrors of a lingering death, was the Father, once the Count d'Arberg, whose works so powerfully contributed to the religious reaction in France. He is braving the danger of martyrdom in the remote countries where his zeal has led him; and the voice we knew so well and admired so much is preaching the Gospel to the children of Asia.

picture that hung near the couch, then at the crucifix that stood at its foot, and proceeded to read the "Foreign Intelligence," a literary review, and whatever else the newspaper contained. Yet in that short instant much had passed in the minds of both, and a tacit understanding arrived at between them. They knew from that day forward that not one shade of resentment existed in either, and that the silence they maintained was not that of indifference.

A short time afterwards Mr. Lifford sent for his grandson, and Gertrude soon removed to his house not to leave it again. The sight of that child was doubtless a trial to the repentant but not yet altered man. Men's prejudices may be overcome to a certain degree, but, especially at that age, not altogether removed. The boy had the run of that large house and those wide solemn gardens, and filled them with childish glee and laughter. He was a great favourite with his uncle, who instructed him in languages and

natural history, and had visions of a change of name for him hereafter, which honour his mother never meant to consent to; but into the terrace-rooms, as they were called, he seldom went, but used now and then from the corner of the walk to peep at his grandfather's stately form and melancholy face—wondering in his childish cogitations if he were doing penance in that room; and he guessed rightly.

It was a long and bitter penance, and it bore fruit in the end. That room and his daughter—its aspect and her presence—wrought a final change in him; and grace found its way to his soul. The sources of past and recent sufferings became as it were sacraments of reconciliation, and symbols of pardon. He made his peace with God, and returned to his religious duties. He atoned for past neglect by many kind and charitable actions; and the curse of a hardened heart and an unforgiving spirit passed away from him for ever.

With duties showered on her path; with a father to console, a child to cherish, and a brother to love; with the *poor* (that inexhaustible mine of bliss to those who have once worked it) to serve, Gertrude was happy with a subdued and quiet happiness. In repentance, in affection, in admiration, they all gathered around her and called her blessed. Those who, like Lady Clara Audley, knew the history of her life, wondered at her cheerfulness, and others who did not sometimes thought they saw

“A story in her face,”

especially on the day when Mary Grey accomplished the desire of her heart, and became a Sister of Mercy, giving henceforward to Jesus, in his suffering ones, that deep store of love which had once been lavished on one only of his creatures. In the words of the American poet,

Other hope had she none, nor wish in life but to follow,
Meekly, with reverent steps, the sacred feet of her Saviour;
Patience and abnegation of self, and devotion to others,
This was the lesson a life of trial and sorrow had taught her.

She in her holy vocation, and Adrien d'Arberg—in the first instance in a foreign land, and then in his own country—labouring with one end, living but for one object, expending all the best powers of intellect, all the rich treasures of the heart with which Heaven had endowed him in the furtherance of God's kingdom upon earth, were both happy indeed, with the happiness of angels—happier than earth's most happy children. Who could doubt it? Who would pity them, who do not pity Elias in his exile, John the Baptist in the desert, or the widow of fourscore who departed not from the temple day or night?

“O there are various paths and ways, the rough ones and the sweet,
Through which God's guiding hand conducts his children's wandering
feet.

Thorns are in all, but some have few to tread down as they go,
And every tree and bush they pass its blossoms o'er them throw ;
The bleeding feet, the aching brow, the desert's scorching air,
The tempter's voice, the inward strife, of others are the share.
Which are most blest? We dare not say; He has a work for each,
An aim, a purpose, and an end, that to his feet will reach.”

Lady Clara Audley and Mr. Lifford met again.
The wound which had so long remained open

closed at last, and to forgive *her*—the first and the only person he had really loved—was one of the results of the change which sorrow, remorse, and the influence of his children had gradually wrought upon him. It was not without agitation, however, that he beheld her again the first time she drove up to that house where he had once hoped to bring her as a bride ; and it was with a strange mixture of pain and emotion that he looked at her, as she stood on the terrace by the side of his daughter, and that he heard the sound of that laugh which had once awoke in his breast such alternations of joy and despair.

As he gazed on her still radiant beauty, he could hardly believe that they had indeed been young together, that not many more years had passed over his head than over hers. Time, which had laid so heavy a hand upon him, had dealt very mercifully with her ; and he could now reflect without bitterness, and even acknowledge with gratitude, that it had been better for both of

them to part as they had done, than to have lived, she to suffer at his hands, and he to see her beautiful face shaded by sorrow or hardening into indifference. He knew himself now well enough to rejoice that she at least had escaped the blighting influence of his remorseless tyranny, that at least that fair flower had been spared the withering touch of his hand.

Lady Clara did not muse so pensively, or meditate so deeply upon the past, on her first visit to Lifford Grange; but, weary as she was growing of the same round of amusements, the same society, however agreeable, and the endless source of varied and yet monotonous amusements in which her days were spent, she found it pleasant to add a new interest to those which were beginning to pall upon her, and soon became as fond of Lady-Bird as at the time of their first acquaintance. She learnt from her some valuable secrets about killing time in a better manner than she had hitherto practised, of turning her love of giving

pleasure into that of promoting happiness, and expanding her taste for the beautiful into a higher development of the same faculty in more exalted directions. Their intercourse was productive of mutual improvements. At Lady Clara's suggestion, new beds of flowers ornamented the gardens of the Grange; clear water flowed through its ruined fountains; clematis adorned the porch of its schools, and China roses clustered on the walls of its almshouses; but, on the other hand, in her home and in the neighbourhood, amidst the profusion of ornament and the luxury of refinement, seeds of usefulness were sown that produced blossoms in time, and fruit in the end.

Two years after Gertrude's arrival at Lifford Grange, Edgar met at Audley Park a young girl for whom he conceived an attachment, and who reciprocated his affection. She was of a good but not an ancient family; he feared to ask his father's consent to their marriage, and Gertrude felt that to be ground on which she did not venture

to tread. But Lady Clara asked for an interview with the man who had once so much loved her, and pleaded the cause of the young people. She tried to smile as she did so, but there was something in his face and manner that checked that smile. She thought he was about abruptly to refuse his consent, but he looked at her steadily, and pointing to his wife's picture and to his daughter's, which had been restored to its place, he said in a slow impressive manner—

“You speak to one whose *Pride* was *their* misery. Send Edgar to me at once: does he think I still worship the idol that destroyed them?”

When Gertrude threw her arms round his neck and thanked him for the consent he had given to her brother's marriage, he held her at a distance from him for an instant, and gazed at her with an indescribable expression. “Do you think I am *not* happy?” she asked with one of those smiles which leave no doubt as to the source from whence

they spring,—a heart full of the peace and joy which the world cannot give nor the world take away. Then he pressed her to his heart, and gave her one of those blessings which, though uttered by human lips, seem to descend straight from Heaven; and since that time there have been flowers in the gardens, and happiness within the walls of the old house of Lifford Grange.

THE END.



LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.





